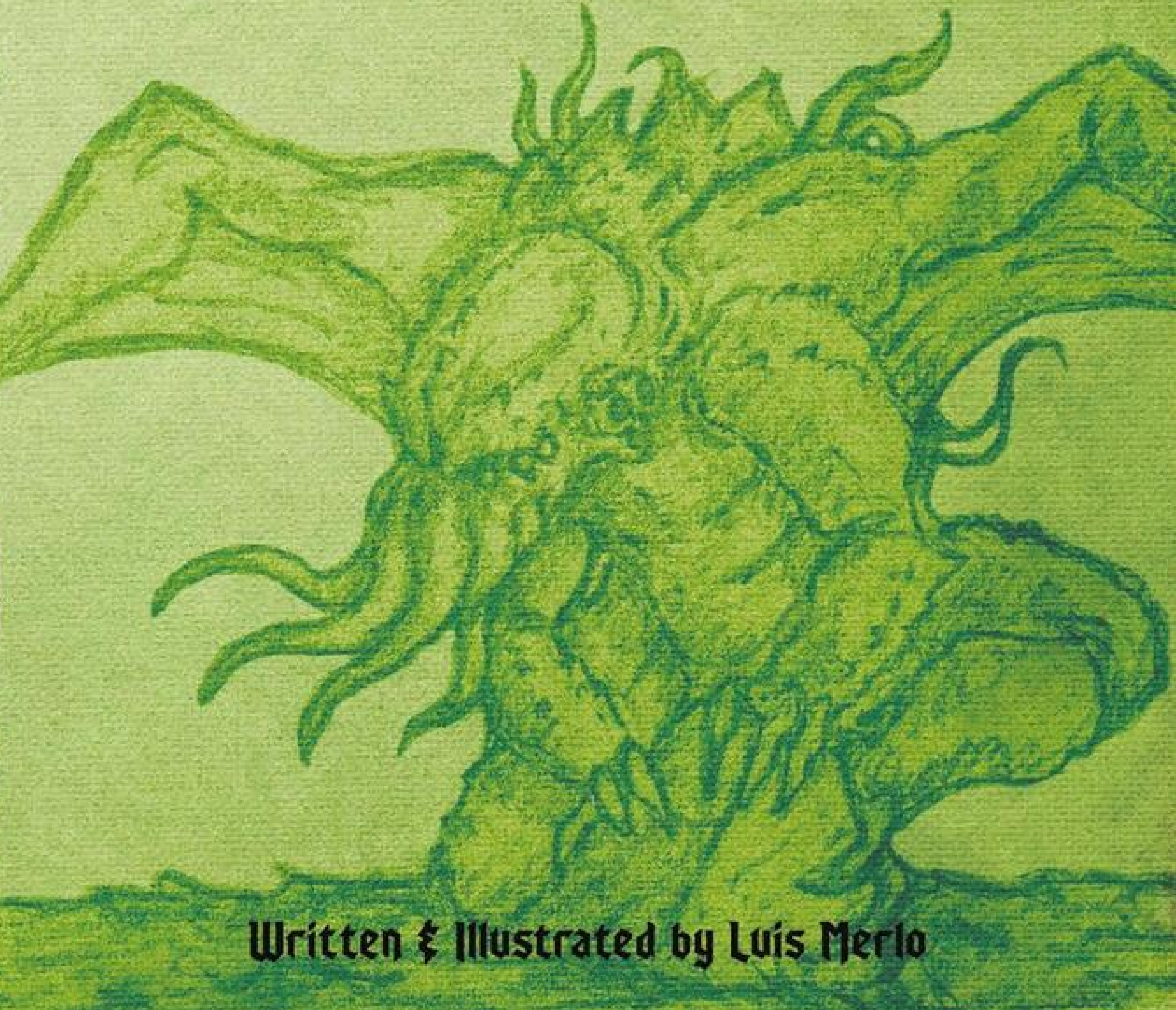
The Anatomical Guide to Lovecraftian Horrors



Written & Illustrated by Luis Merlo

The Anatomical Guide to Lovecraftian Horrors

Written and illustrated by Luis Merlo
Additional material by Sandy Petersen

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Table of Contents

The Anatomical Guide to Lovecraftian Horrors . . 1
The Transition of Luis Merlo 3
Author's Note 4
Introduction to a Transdimensional World 5
Human Comprehension and the Silver Key. 5
On Monsters and Demons 6
Classification of a Creature's Dimensional Nature . 7
Individual Creature Descriptions 8
Being of Ib 9
Byakhee. 12
Dark Young 15
Deep One 18
Deep One Hybrid 21
Dhole 24
Elder Thing 27
Flying Polyp 31
Formless Spawn 34
Fungi from Yuggoth (Mi-Go) 37
Ghast 41
Dreamland Ghast. 42
Gyaa-Yoth 45
Ghoul 47
Gnoph-keh 50
Gnorri 53
Gug 57
Hound of Tindalos 60
Hunting Horror 63
Leng Folk 66
Moon-Beast 69
Mutant Satyr. 72
Nightgaunt 76
Reanimated of K'n-yan. 79
Serpent Folk 82
Servitor of the Outer Gods 85
Shantak. 88
Shoggoth 91
Starspawn 94
Wamp 98
Yithian (Great Race) 101
Zoog 105
Credits 107

The Transition of Luis Merlo

In 2018, Dr. Luis Merlo first contacted me with his idea for a scientific work about the otherworld entities which Howard Phillips Lovecraft first revealed to the world in the 1920s and 1930s. Naturally I assumed this would be a work of fiction, like my own Petersen's Field Guides (1987, 1988).

But as Luis started sending me more and more of his sketches, some on paper stained by mysterious fluids, I started wondering . . . just where WAS he getting these? One letter came with a thumbprint stained in blood, and Luis' cover letter mentioned that he would not be able to draw any images for a few weeks, because his arm had been "injured in a recent foray". Once, a package came with a pungent-smelling, horny claw, which he claimed to be a Deep One's fingernail. I was even more mystified.

As his amazing revelations accumulated, I contacted Luis, and told him that Petersen Games was keenly interested in printing his work. Still, in the back of my mind, I assumed it was all from his amazing imagination. I ignored the evidence that it might be more than just creative literature—and moved ahead. I signed a contract with Luis and was excited to become his publisher.

But then, in early 2020, his letters stopped. Nothing. I barraged him with e-mails and letters of my own. Anxiously, I called his phone. Still no reply. After three weeks of dead air, I was frantic. I booked an airline ticket and flew to Ecuador. I took a taxi to his doorstep, only to see a ruin. His house was a skeletal shamble. Spears of lumber jutted into the air. Shingles were strewn over the overgrown yard. A few concrete blocks lay jumbled.

I walked forward, dazed and confused. Was I at the wrong address? Behind me the taxi driver sped away—I only realized this later. I picked up a fragment of wood—it seemed corroded, rather than burnt. What had happened here?

Luis Merlo's house was at the termination of a lengthy dead-end road. The nearest neighbor was at least a hundred meters away. I remembered that in one of his missives, he'd boasted about how his experiments didn't inconvenience others on his road, and now I saw why. I saw some children playing in a field at the other end of the road and walked over to ask them if they knew what had happened.

"Sí, señor. El edificio . . . explotó."

Exploded? That made no sense. I asked if they heard it.

"Un montón de chillidos a medianoche."

Screeching? At midnight? I wanted to ask more questions, but a woman came out of a house and ordered the children inside. She scowled at me until I left. I returned to the ruins of the Merlo house, and poked around some more.

There were steps leading down! I picked my way down through the rubble, hoping something had survived intact. A stink, like that of the reptile house at an ill-kept zoo, permeated the atmosphere. There, in the dark cavern underground, I found the bone of a shoulder blade, riddled with holes. Was it human? I also found a few fragments of bone, some with tooth marks. During the day, I strive diligently to believe that these bones were from a wandering sheep or dog. But in the dark hours of the morning, when I wake up in a cold sweat, I know better.

I also found this manuscript in its entirety. Well . . . since I had signed the contract with Dr. Merlo, Petersen Games technically owned that manuscript, morally if not legally. I tucked it under my arm and carried it upstairs.

What nameless dread had Luis' activities summoned from the night sky? What fate had his investigations led to? We may never know, but at least we can profit from his wisdom. Unfortunately, in the realm of the otherworld, knowledge is not always power. If prayers have any efficacy, I pray that this knowledge will protect us, rather than leave us vulnerable and open to the vast Beyond.

– Sandy Petersen February 11, 2020

Author's Note

In a universe so vast like our own, populated by creatures so limited like ourselves, I have come to the realization that magic and science are but two sides of the same coin. Despite their seemingly opposite approaches, they both seek the same goal: to explain and understand the nature of the world we live in. It is true that the high priests of old spoke out of belief while modern positivists rely on evidence, but the phenomena they all desperately attempt to understand is always derived from the same empiric experience.

As mankind has shifted towards the objective understanding of reality, it seems that most folkloric knowledge has been left behind for good. While this is understandable from a scientific point of view, I fear that leaving this knowledge behind could not only be foolish, but also dangerous. To put it in practical terms, the fact that the explanation of a certain phenomenon is incorrect does not mean the phenomenon itself is inexistent. It simply means it's misunderstood.

I myself, being a man of science, feel the urge to understand that which has been dubbed "unexplainable" by our ancestors; and to name that which has remained "unnamable". That is why I began my quest to find, decipher and compile as much knowledge as I can about the life forms that populate our universe but that have, for some reason or another, been locked away from the public eye.

By gathering passages from ancient texts, studying witness accounts, and compiling logs from doomed expeditions I was able to grasp a general understanding of the world I was about to describe. Sure, the authors of all the source material I used either died premature deaths or disappeared inexplicably, but that didn't hold me back. I cannot yet explain how I came to create the images presented here, or how I gathered the details for every entry as these aspects of my work will be revealed at a later time. Despite this, I must ask the reader to trust my background as an empiricist and rely on this as an incomplete, yet objective representation of the lore that the western world left behind.

-LM

Introduction to a Transdimensional World

Human Comprehension and the Silver Key

Human comprehension of the cosmos has always been painfully limited. For obvious reasons, we are forced to understand our infinitely complex universe by using nothing but our five senses. As well-developed as our minds may be, they still rely on images, sounds, and emotion to navigate through the near-infinite constellation of semantic networks found in our memories. Because of this, it's hard to conceive the world beyond that which is evident, and it's hard to discern when our brain has, perhaps as a merciful act of natural selection, blocked our understanding of a world beyond our own. Still, the ever-developing discoveries of science have sometimes resounded on echoes of past belief and suggested that some archaic knowledge may have held, in some way or another, a symbolic clue of our place in the universe.

While painfully complex and ever adaptable, the human species is a persistent victim to its own anthropocentric nature. Our first instinct is to measure the world by our own standards and according to our own laws, and often fail to consider our relative position in the whole. Even worse, the sole concept that our senses are subjective and limited, and that a whole different cosmological experience is possible seems insane. This is not pathological, however, as it has helped the human animal to adapt and survive in the most pragmatic of senses. After all, why should the human brain challenge the concept of color, sound or touch? What adaptive use could rise from the sole consideration that we can't feel the wind or another's hand, and that instead all we feel is the deformation of our own skin? Why should we think about sound and light being nothing more than the result of activation patterns in our brains caused by vibrations around us?

These logical and cognitive limitations lead to the anthropomorphizing of natural phenomena to help us understand it. A wind that howls, a river that sings, and a plant that wills are all comprehensible to us, because we too can howl, sing, and will. Because of this, we also judge our world as good or evil, and classify existence in such terms. We depend on evil to explain the unpredictable nature of our world and rely on good to sustain hope. Villains such as wolves and snakes are woven into our psyche and are blamed for all of our misfortunes. But is a wolf evil for hunting a child? Can the snake choose who to bite when offended? If so, could a disease, earthquake or meteorite be blamed and morally judged? Maybe they should be judged, if only for the sake of our own anthropocentric sanity, as an amoral world and an indifferent cosmos are infinitely more frightening than a war between avatars of good and evil. To paraphrase a fellow explorer of the cosmos whose fate remains unknown: *". . . The worm will forever think the elephant is evil for stomping on it, but the elephant will probably never even know the worm existed . . ."*.

The truth is that existence is older than we can ever comprehend, and it is composed of infinite dimensions that group like bubbles barely touching each other. How these dimensions originated is hard to tell, but it seems to be tied to one single factor: chaos. Theoretically, a perfectly harmonic universe would not exist at all, because energy and matter require systems, and every system leads to chaos. Because of this, ancient manuscripts tell of a single force that gave rise to all existence. A force of perpetual chaos and destruction, a source of imbalance, that allows every universe to exist. This force, this place, this thing is the one true dimensional junction and its name is Azathoth. Chaotic as it is, it destroys and creates unwillingly, and would consume all universes and itself if left to grow.

As all dimensions were created, different forms of consciousness arose from their interaction with each other. Like cells in an organic system, interacting dimensions gave rise to beings whose comparison with mere life would be insulting. These creatures are far more complex than any mind can comprehend, and their three-dimensional form is but a fraction of their infinitely-dimensional composition. These beings were dubbed the “Outer Gods” by the ancients, and are outside the effects of time and space, birth and death.

Within the dimensions that made up the Outer Gods, smaller creatures with limited dimensions began to form. The most prominent of these were named the “Great Old Ones” and they had shapes that were recognizable to lesser, three-dimensional organisms. Still, their multiple dimensions are impossible to conceive, as our nature limits us to the comprehension of three spatial axes and an arrow of time. If we imagine a three-dimensional cone, a two-dimensional being would see it as a triangle, or a circle or a hyperbole depending on where it stands. In the same way, we perceive transdimensional beings as corporeal, but this is but an infinitely small fraction of their real form.

As simpler transdimensional beings formed, their ability to understand their forefathers became more and more limited until they reached their lesser form—three-dimensional creatures. This perceptual limitation is even greater when it comes to understanding transdimensional beings’ motivations and thoughts. Because of this, matter-based organisms such as ourselves tend to see more complex beings as evil. “Monsters”, “Gods”, and “Demons” being monikers for things that escape our comprehension.

On Monsters and Demons

The purpose of this volume is to illustrate some of the most fascinating “lesser” creatures of our universe, not as monsters, but as natural beings that exist in our own plane (or dimension) or different ones. Their nature is so variable that some may seem familiar to us while others may challenge even our conception of how life should be understood. Whether they are calm or violent, simple or complex, gentle or sadistic, all creatures described here function as they are meant to, and all have evolved to occupy their niche. What’s more, magic has nothing to do with them, as their various physiologies are gradually unveiled by our advances in anatomy, biology, chemistry and physics, among many other sciences. Of course, our knowledge is infinitely small and incomplete, but as we learn more, we make better questions and find better answers.

Evolution appears to work in similar ways on cosmic scales as it does at a planetary level. A group of recognizable organisms will gradually adapt to occupy different niches and will be selected when environmental conditions change. This is the basic drive of evolution and speciation. Following these principles, similar environmental conditions will usually lead to similar adaptive paths in completely different clades (this is called **convergent evolution**). This concept helps us understand how some traits, like cognition, evolved in so many different organisms that have nothing in common (e.g., Moon Things, Deep Ones, and Zoogs). The opposite effect happens when various niches suddenly become unoccupied (e.g., after a mass extinction), where one single species may diverge into many different forms to occupy these vacant ecological spots (this is called **divergent evolution** or **adaptive radiation**). This process could have, for instance, caused the early radiation of humans, Ghouls and Leng Folk; provided additional evidence would support it.

Naturally, the study of cosmic life can be a lifelong endeavor and, even still, one would always fail to grasp even the surface of all that can be found. Because of this, it is important to understand that many organism families branch into multiple species and subspecies, some of which have yet to be discovered. Some organisms have evolved dramatic variations within their clades, while others have remained relatively homogenous. Environmental pressures, habitat, genetic mutations, artificial selection, and mass extinctions are all forces that have helped shape what we conceive as life; and have thus created an endless trove of creatures, most of which are still poorly understood.

The study of organisms described here has only been possible thanks to the work of dozens of scholars who have dedicated their lives to the recording of their findings and, more importantly, their sharing of these records through written text. This way, the work of occult scientists like cryptobiologists, hyperdimensional physicists, oneirozoologists, exobotanists, and many others, can come together in a single compendium meant to illustrate to the general public, scholars, and explorers alike on the wonders (and hazards) of transdimensional biodiversity. Be it through diligent study of local folklore and grimoires, or actual experimentation with dimensional rifts and natural observation, every bit of information has helped improve our understanding of these endless forms almost unnamable.

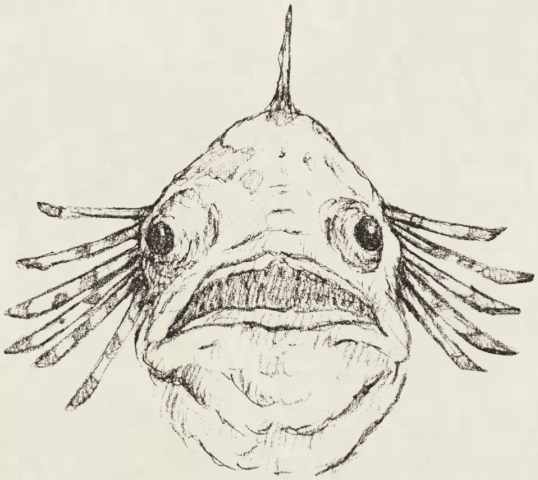
Classification of a Creature's Dimensional Nature

- **Matter-based:** The creature is mainly composed of matter and is three-dimensional. Dreamlands creatures are composed of analogous particles and are classified here as well, with the "dream" specification. These types of creatures have limited interdimensional travel capacities and need aid to do so.

- **Interdimensional:** The creature is capable of seamless travel across dimensions thanks to its natural adaptations. Beings that are transported through dimensions by force or by chance are not included in this classification. Most interdimensional creatures have a matter-based body and are unable to exist in different dimensions simultaneously.

- **Multidimensional:** The creature is composed partially of matter but requires energy or structural support from another dimensional reality. Creatures that have a main corporeal structure but are also composed of non-material particles have also been included in this classification.

- **Transdimensional:** The creature exists and interacts simultaneously with multiple different dimensions beyond the three axes of space and the arrow of time. They are the hardest beings to conceive and truly impossible to comprehend. This type of creature is often unable to grasp the concept of life as we know it and, because of this, has no regard for living things.



Individual Creature Descriptions

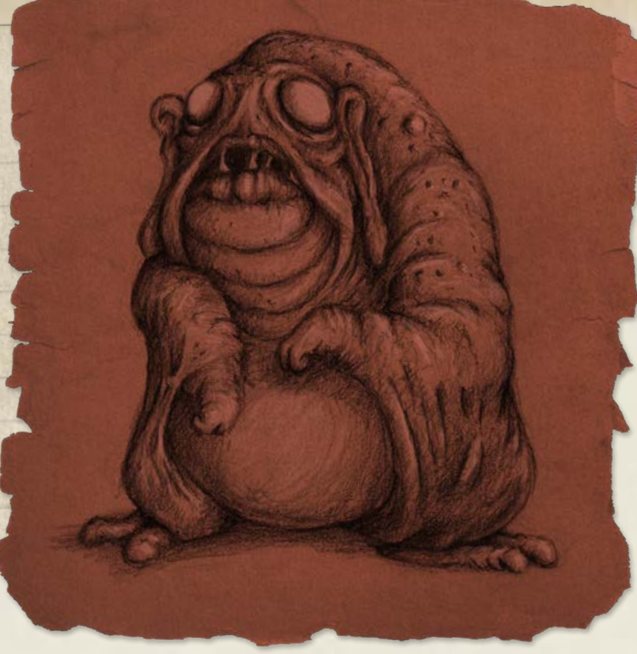
Being of Ib

Nature: Multidimensional lunar creature

Weight: 0 – 30 kg / 0 – 66 lbs.

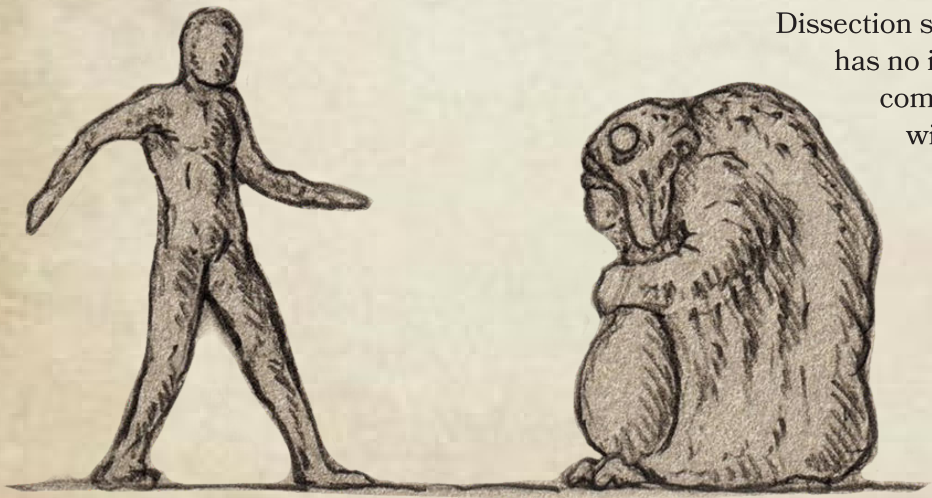
Height: ~1.5 m / 4.9 ft.

Habitat: Dreamlands' region of Mnar



Small, gelatinous creatures, beings of Ib are a species of understudied humanoids known to have settled in the land of Mnar long before any other known civilization reached this region. They are moon worshipers devoted to the lizard creature Bokrug and were first contacted by human dreamers as colonizers began to spread throughout the uncharted lands of Mnar.

While the human city of Sarnath and the stone city of Ib coexisted for some time, men never accepted their neighbors' bizarre appearance and primeval customs. This led to animosity towards the creatures and the eventual invasion of Ib by the young warriors of Sarnath.



Anatomical Features:

Beings of Ib are vaguely humanoid in appearance but possess anatomical and physiological features alien to most waking-world life. Their study is particularly difficult due to the scarcity of physical samples both living and dead. Still, the observation of a small colony and successful dissection of a relatively fresh corpse have provided some valuable information to help understand these creatures. They are easy to identify as they resemble hunched bipeds with pale greenish skin and prominent facial features. They have bulbous eyes that never blink, flaccid lips, and large earlobes. Their forelimbs are connected to their hindlimbs through a patagial-like membrane and have an overall gelatinous texture.

Dissection shows that the creature's body has no internal divisions. Instead, it's composed of a single chamber filled with a gelatinous, protein-rich substance. There are no bones of any kind; and close examination shows that its structural integrity depends upon a dense collagen matrix. Its only identifiable internal organ is a brain-like structure that rests inside a meningeal membrane within the creature's core. On the outside, its

integumentary system features a thin epidermis composed of highly specialized tissue that grants little protection from UV radiation and desiccation.
Close study of the being's eyes shows a complete lack of eyelids and ocular muscles, which explains its vacant expression. Large pupils suggest an adaptation to dimly-lit environments and an evident lack of light-refracting structures implies a different visual physiology to that of waking-world chordates. Axon-like projections connect both eyes and ears directly to its central nervous system.

Biology & Ecology:

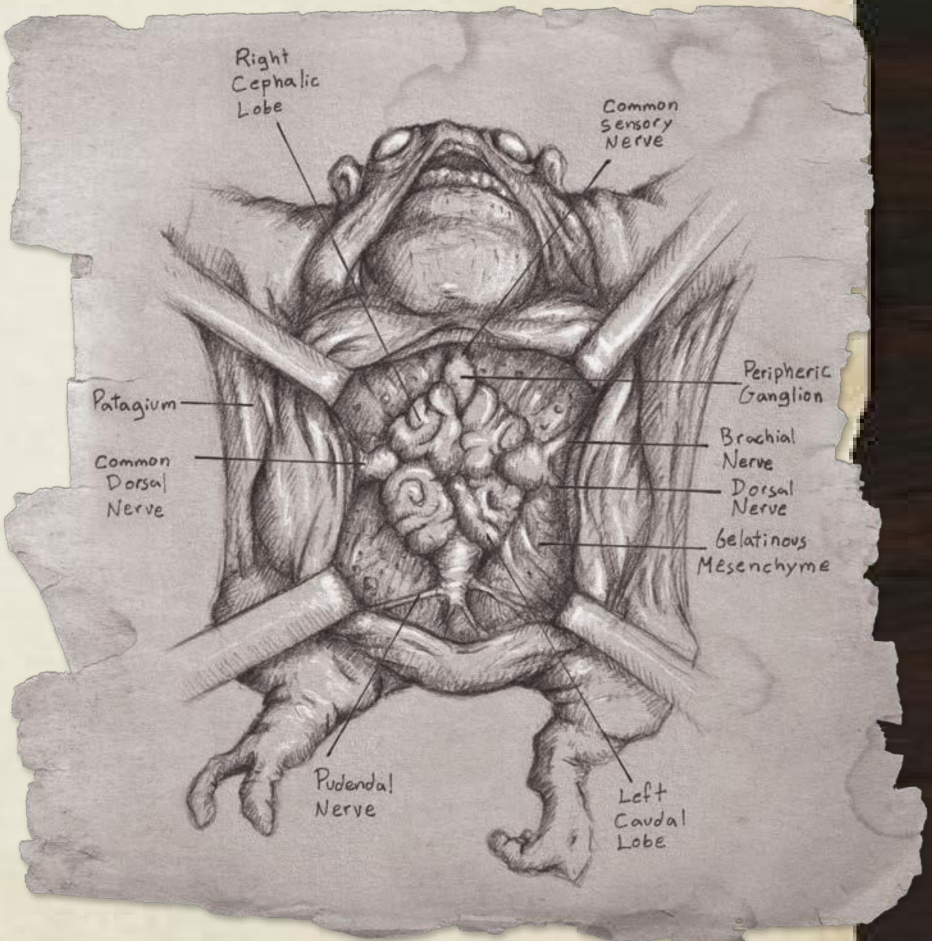
Beings of Ib, though simple in structure, are thought to be at least four-dimensional. This has been suggested by scholars and folklorists for a long time—since the first appearance of the infamous "ghosts of Sarnath". According to historical records and witness accounts, it would seem that when the creatures' spatial form is destroyed, their unbound time projections can cause strange illusions to manifest in the vicinity of their deaths at varying moments in time. These projections (called "ghosts" by locals) seem to be tied to the lunar cycle and activity from within the lake in Mnar.

These creatures are partially composed of regular matter and partially composed of another, unknown form of substance. Decomposition occurs immediately after the creature dies, in a manner similar to fungi from Yuggoth. However, exposing the cadaver to direct moonlight seems to significantly slow the decaying process.

Since their bodies are mostly gelatinous and lack a musculoskeletal system, beings of Ib move by electrically stimulating their tissues to contract them. Because of this, their movements are slow and bizarre to human observers.

Close study of epidermal cells shows an abundance of structures similar to dendrites and chloroplast-like organelles that work best under the wavelength of direct moonlight. This, and the lack of any digestive or pulmonary system, suggests that their cellular respiration process is achieved without ventilation and that energy production is dependent on some type of photosynthesis.

All metabolic and sensory-motor functions are coordinated directly by the central nervous system. Measuring the electrical activity on this organ shows wave patterns incredibly similar to human REM sleep.



Humanoids are usually bothered by the Beings of Ib's general appearance and lack of attention to their current environment. Direct interaction with them usually results in vague responses at best. Some have attempted to explain this by suggesting that the transdimensional nature of these creatures allows them to see different moments in time at once, making their interaction with other creatures in any given instant irrelevant.

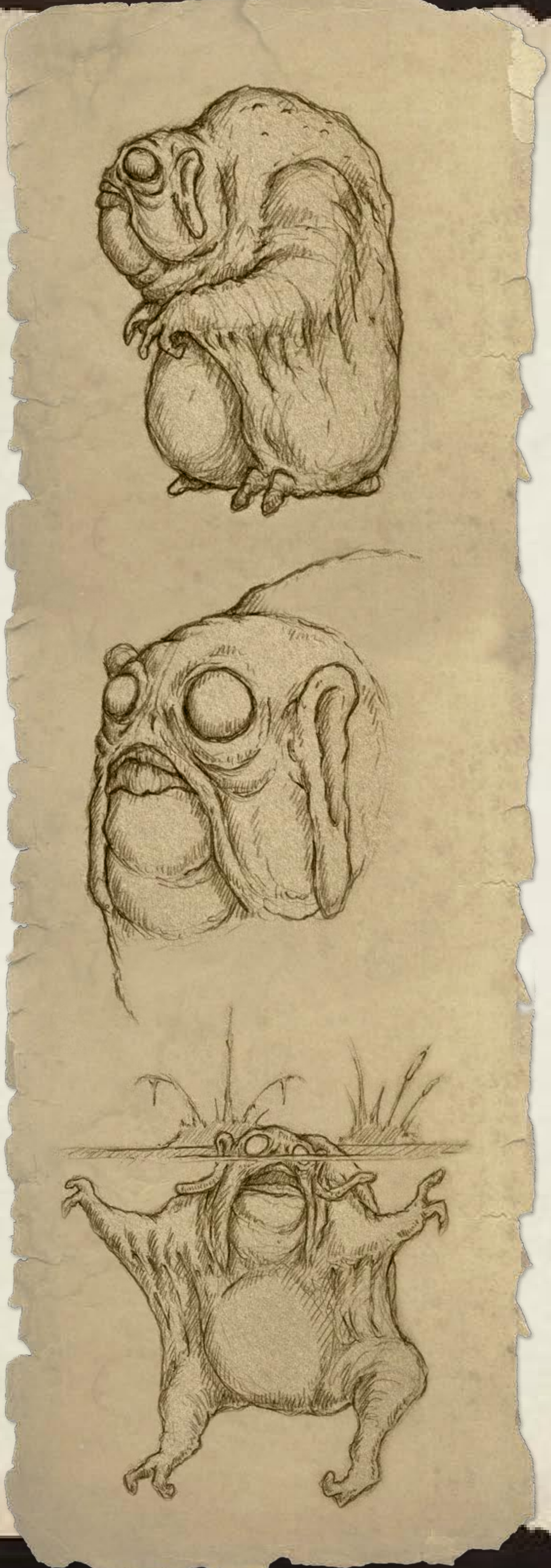
Beings of Ib seem to grow larger and more active when the moon is full. They use this energy to perform rites of lunar adoration centered on the lake in Mnar. Their rites are usually water-based and focus on the legendary creature that sleeps at the bottom of the lake.

Development:

The Beings of Ib's development process is mostly unknown. Folk tales suggest that they originated in the Dreamlands' moon and traveled to Mnar from there. Others have even suggested that the stone city of Ib and Lake Mnar are not actually on the land of Mnar, but instead are the result of projections of light that refract through lunar ruins long forgotten. This hypothesis would imply that the creatures, the lake, and their city are all just impressions in time with no real spatial manifestation.

Explorer's Note:

Beings of Ib are very hard to come by, but exploration of the ruins of Ib under a full moon may sometimes reveal small remnant colonies performing their lake rituals.



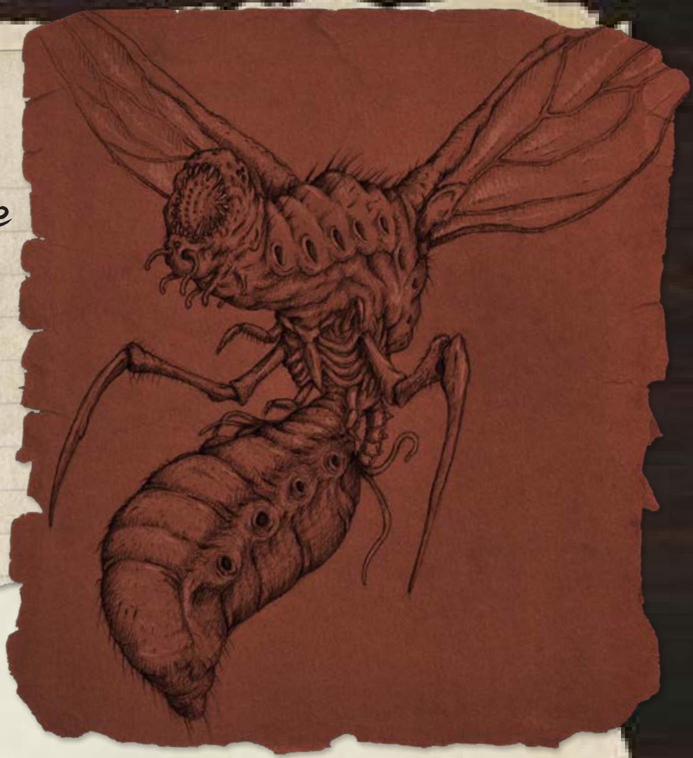
Byakhee

Nature: Interdimensional animal parasite

Weight: ~380 kg / 840 lbs.

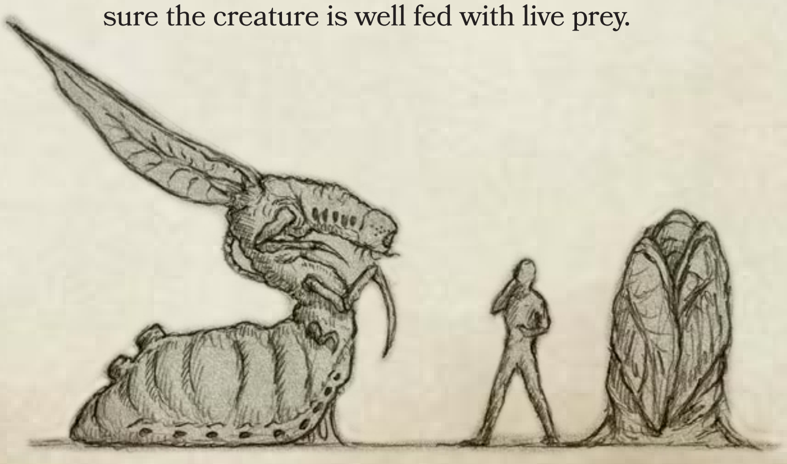
Height: ~2.5 m / 8.2 ft.

Habitat: Caves, cemeteries, and ancient temples across dimensions



The Byakhee are a species of interdimensional parasites, usually sought by cultists, zoologists, and cryptologists, from different parts of the universe. While eerie in appearance their innate ability to travel between dimensions makes them an invaluable, albeit dangerous, resource for ambitious scholars. An adult Byakhee is usually larger than a horse and resembles a large, winged hybrid creature with some arthropod and helminth (parasitic worm) features. Because of their development cycle, juvenile adults generally resemble the sentient organisms' corpses that they have consumed.

In the wild, an adult Byakhee will actively seek to feed off living planetary creatures across different dimensions. However, as with any parasite, their main drive seems to be mass reproduction through infestation. While they can be tamed, adult Byakhee are dangerous and instinctive predators that require large amounts of food to sustain their high metabolic rates. Before approaching one, experienced tamers will make sure the creature is well fed with live prey.



Anatomical Features:

Adult Byakhee grow out of the corpses of sentient organisms and usually retain the appearance of their host for some time. Young individuals repurpose most of their host's organs and limbs for their own needs. Older, more mature individuals are less dependent on their host's structural support and may scrape some of it off once their appendages are covered in hardened chitin. The adult's body is divided in two main regions: prosoma and opisthosoma. The prosoma includes the capitulum, neck, and thorax, while the opisthosoma contains all of the abdominal structures.

The prosoma's capitulum is a head-like structure that contains the parasite's feeding organs, mandibles and eyes. While most Byakhee have these features in some way or another, their presence and configuration is dependent on the particular species being observed. Some creatures develop different appendages depending on their genotype, needs, host, and random mutations. Adult Byakhee are not dependent on eyesight but may develop up to nine eyes. The neck's main features are the hune apertures, which connect to the main hune organ inside the abdomen.

Large chitinous appendages emerge from the ventral thorax and feature curved claws that help the creature dig and hunt. Young individuals may use their host's bones and muscles to support these appendages until they fully mature. The dorsal thorax features two to four membranous wings that allow the Byakhee to maneuver inside an atmosphere.

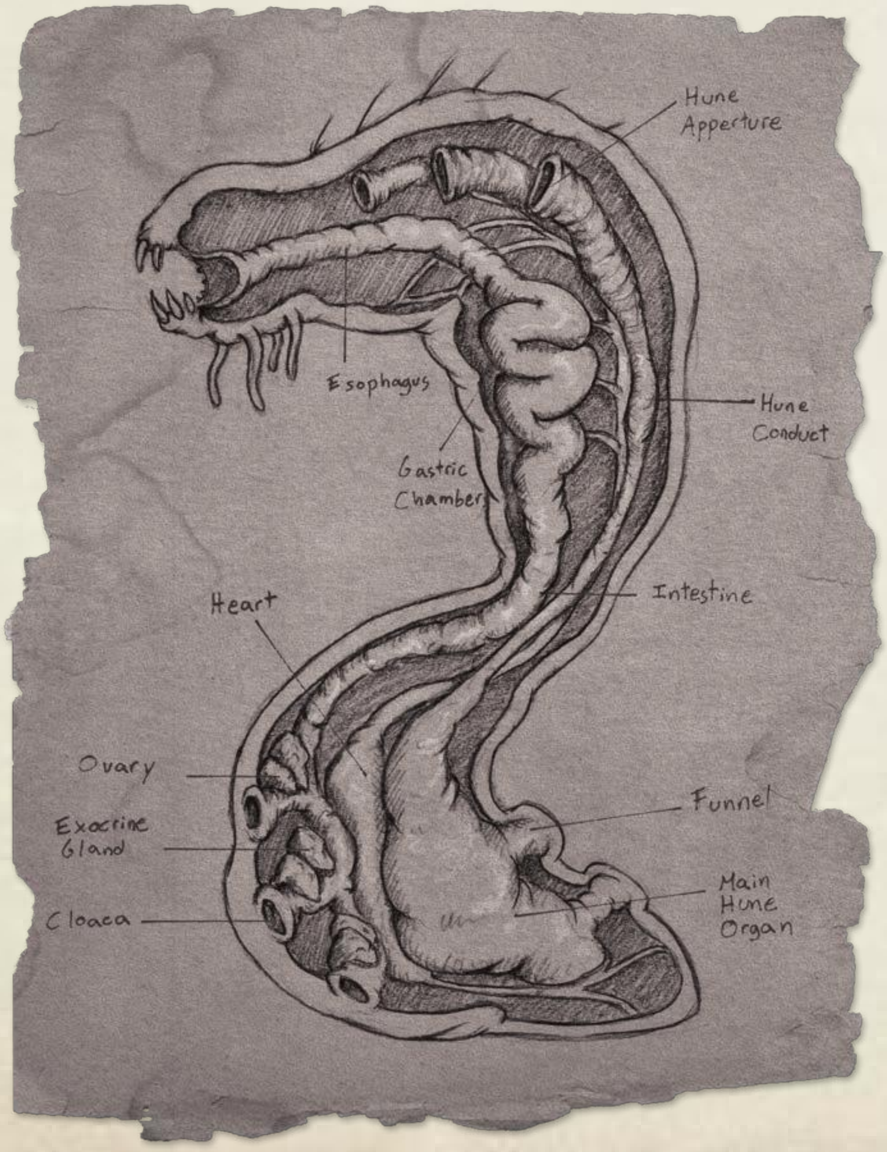
Dissection shows that most of the thorax is filled with the creature's digestive system, while the opisthosoma contains most of the circulatory, reproductive, and respiratory systems. The tubular heart is contained inside the pericardial sack, from which ichor vessels are distributed to the rest of the body. Ovaries and ventral exocrine glands are connected to intestinal prolongations that lead to multiple cloacae. The dorsal region of the opisthosoma contains the hune organ, which connects to apertures in the neck and funnels on the back.

Biology & Ecology:

Byakhee are parasitic organisms that result from the successful infestation of a deceased or debilitated sentient being. They are multicellular eukaryotes with features similar to both helminths and arthropods, so most cryptobiologists include them within the animal clade. Young adults feature a soft, grub-like body, while older individuals are covered in chitinous plates.

When active, these creatures require large amounts of energy to maintain their accelerated metabolism. This energy is usually obtained from an iron-rich feeding source but may also be passively transferred from a source of cosmic radiation. While rare, these energy sources usually emanate from gates, artifacts, and transdimensional beings, or near ancient sanctuaries, cemeteries, and research facilities that have dealt with interdimensional contact.

If there is no adequate prey or energy source nearby, a Byakhee may use its hune organ for faster-than-light or interdimensional travel in order to find new hunting grounds. While this method of travel is of great interest to scholars, it's still poorly understood. One theory suggests that the organ is able to contract space before the creature while dilating the space behind it, allowing it to travel at apparent superluminal speed. A different approach suggests instead that the organ is able to interact with dark energy, which it syphons through its body to propel itself across the universe through hyperspace. In any case, it has been proven that the use of the hune organ is incredibly taxing on the creature and consumes immense amounts of energy.



Byakhee are not territorial but are usually found alone or in small groups. They are not known to be social creatures and will not bond or form colonies. A single adult may be drawn to weak energy sources such as transdimensional artifacts or minor interdimensional experiments. The creature will usually build a lair near the power source and begin feeding and reproducing as soon as it arrives. Larger energy sources tend to attract more adults, causing serious infestations. Such is the case with potent sources that are left active for long periods of time, like dormant transdimensional beings or junctions, which will eventually attract hundreds or thousands of ravenous Byakhee to their surroundings.

If nutrients become scarce and energy storage is insufficient for interdimensional travel, an adult Byakhee may enter a dormant phase similar to that of a tardigrade. It does this by dehydrating most of its body and covering itself in a resistant slime secreted by its ventral exocrine glands. This same substance protects the creature in hostile environments and helps with the protection and dissemination of eggs. When dormant, an adult may spend decades without any form of nutrition.

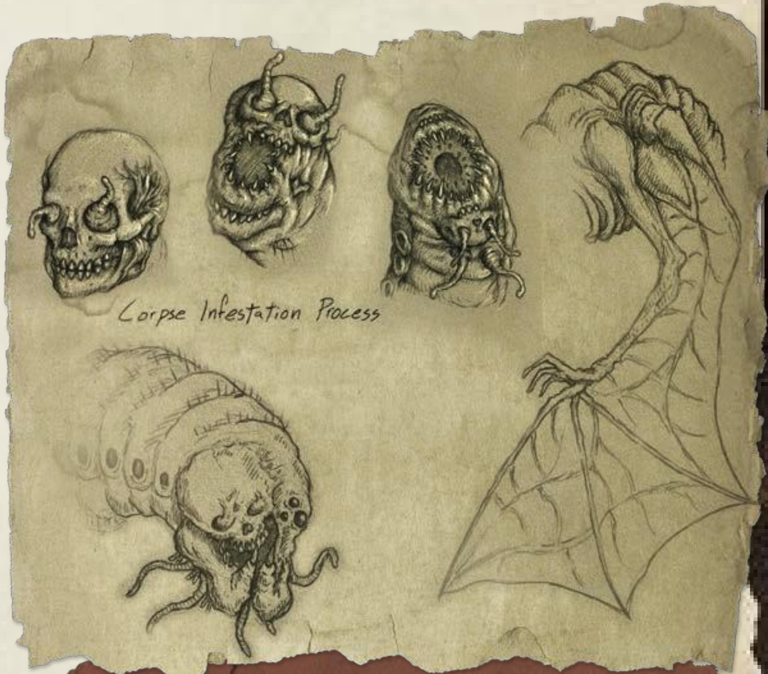
Development:

A fertile adult Byakhee may produce hundreds of tiny eggs per day, which are expelled from its ovaries into a common secretion duct. The eggs are then covered in mucous slime secreted by the abdominal ventral glands and excreted to the intestine, and out of the cloacae.

Eggs are usually swallowed by living creatures after drinking or feeding off a contaminated source, but they may also enter the body through wounds and exposed mucosae. Once hatched, the small larvae will cause subclinical symptoms as they feed off the intestinal wall and will only reach adulthood when the host's immune system fails completely (either the host is terminally ill or dead). As a general rule, only one larva will successfully develop into a juvenile.

The juvenile parasite will grow and invade the gut tissue and eventually reach the central nervous system through the spinal cord. Once it connects with the host's decaying spine it will be able to repurpose its organs and limbs to gain higher motricity (motor functions). The parasite will then develop into a full adult with the help of its host's tissues.

Even if contamination by Byakhee eggs is common in populations near a colony, most hosts will never successfully spawn a fully grown adult. In order to survive and thrive, the creature's juvenile form needs persistent exposure to a source of cosmic radiation. If there is no such energy source nearby, the infesting parasites simply wither and die as their host decomposes.



Explorer's Note:

Byakhee are easily identified by the shriek caused by air flowing through their hune canals. Always remember, a shrieking Byakhee is a hungry Byakhee!

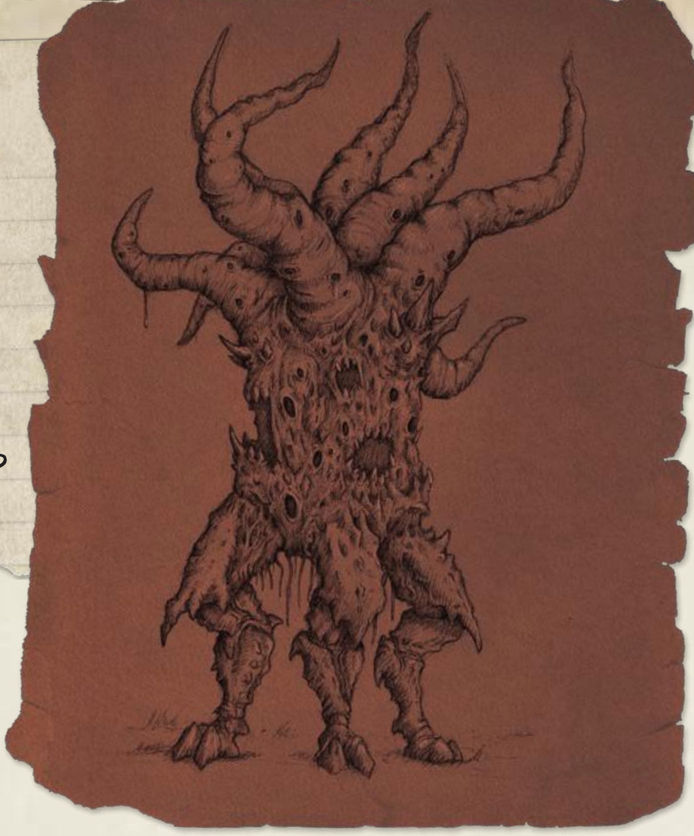
Dark Young

Nature: Matter-based fungal growth

Weight: ~10 t / 11 s. t.

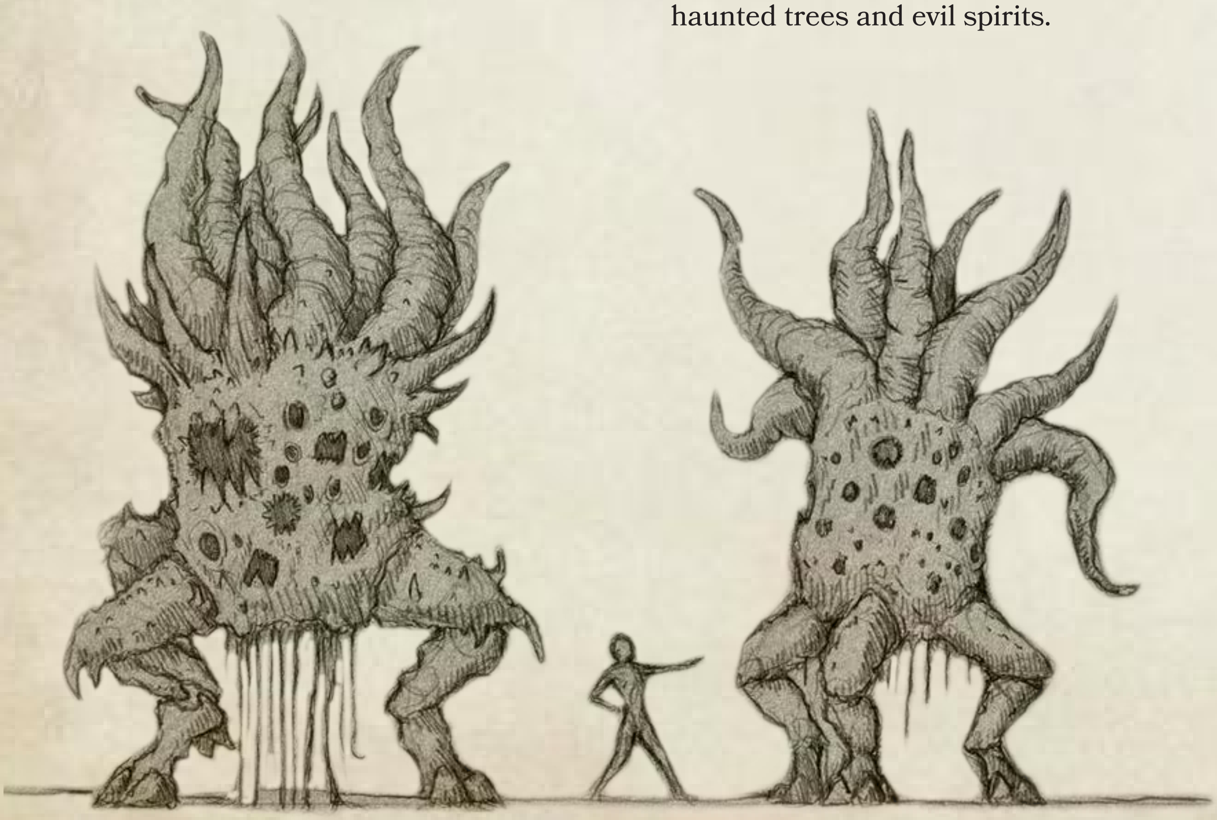
Height: Up to 7 m / 23 ft.

Habitat: Ancient forests or dark, damp edifications across dimensions



Dark Young get their name from their theorized origin as spawn of Shub Niggurath, an ancient transdimensional being also known as the “Black Goat”. They are usually known to be the bane of explorers that venture into dark, primeval woods where cults have practiced communion rituals with the Black Goat. Dark Young resemble leafless, overgrown trees standing on two to four limbs and crowned with about a dozen tentacle-like prolongations. Their bodies are covered with pores of different sizes and larger openings that resemble toothed mouths.

Although they are extremely dangerous inside their habitats, Dark Young rarely pose a real threat to human settlements outside dense woodlands. Populations that do live near these creatures usually develop some sort of fear of these dark forests and tell folk tales about haunted trees and evil spirits.



Anatomical Features:

While Dark Young may have animal-like features, close study of their cells shows a closer relation to fungi. Their body is composed of a single, large soma with specialized appendages emerging from its top and bottom sides. The top appendages (or crown) resemble strong tentacles and are used to aid in feeding and defense. The bottom appendages are used for locomotion and resemble long tree trunks ending in hoof-like structures. The creature's body is mostly filled with openings of varying sizes, ranging from small pores to large, mouth-like apertures. Most Dark Young feature no eyes.

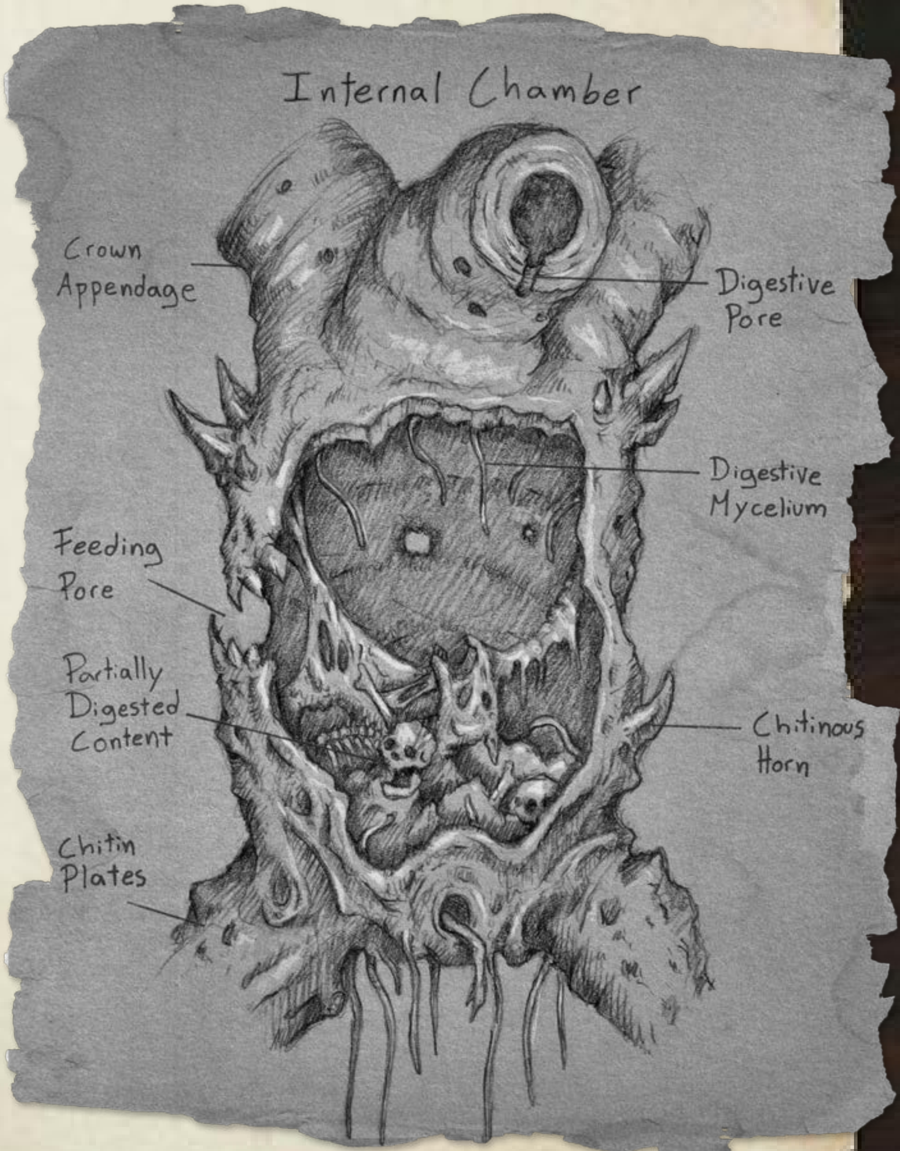
A close look at the creature's tentacles shows that they are actually highly specialized forms of skeletal hyphae that have achieved locomotion due to acquired electrochemical reactions. Their sturdiness and flexibility are balanced owing to thin chitin deposits that give an impression of scales. Older individuals usually show a form of acanthosis where chitin deposits grow thicker and form "horns", which limit the creature's movement range. A tentacle's pores are usually small and secrete digestive enzymes when pressed.

Lower limbs are similar in structure to their upper counterparts, but feature thicker chitinous deposits that grant more protection while hindering free movement. This difference causes these limbs to appear more leg-like; with pseudoarticular points that allow some flexibility and motricity.

Dissection of the creature reveals a single body chamber with an otherwise hollow interior. This compartment is typically filled with dismembered birds, reptiles and mammals in various stages of digestion. Hair-like mycelial threads sprout from the inner body walls and cover the creature's digestive chamber.

Biology & Ecology:

Dark Young are brainless, solitary creatures. They require some level of atmospheric humidity to thrive, so they are ordinarily found in dark, damp environments; such as decaying forests, marshes, and abandoned ancient structures. Due to their lack of photoreceptors, these creatures are indifferent to the presence of light around them. They are known to possess mechanoreceptors and chemoreceptors but other, yet unknown senses cannot be ruled out.



Once a Dark Young has found an appropriate, nutrient-rich environment, it will rarely move. Instead, the creature will passively absorb nutrients from decomposing organics in the soil and eat any living organism that may cross its path. However, due to their slow metabolism, Dark Young can survive without feeding on large prey for years.

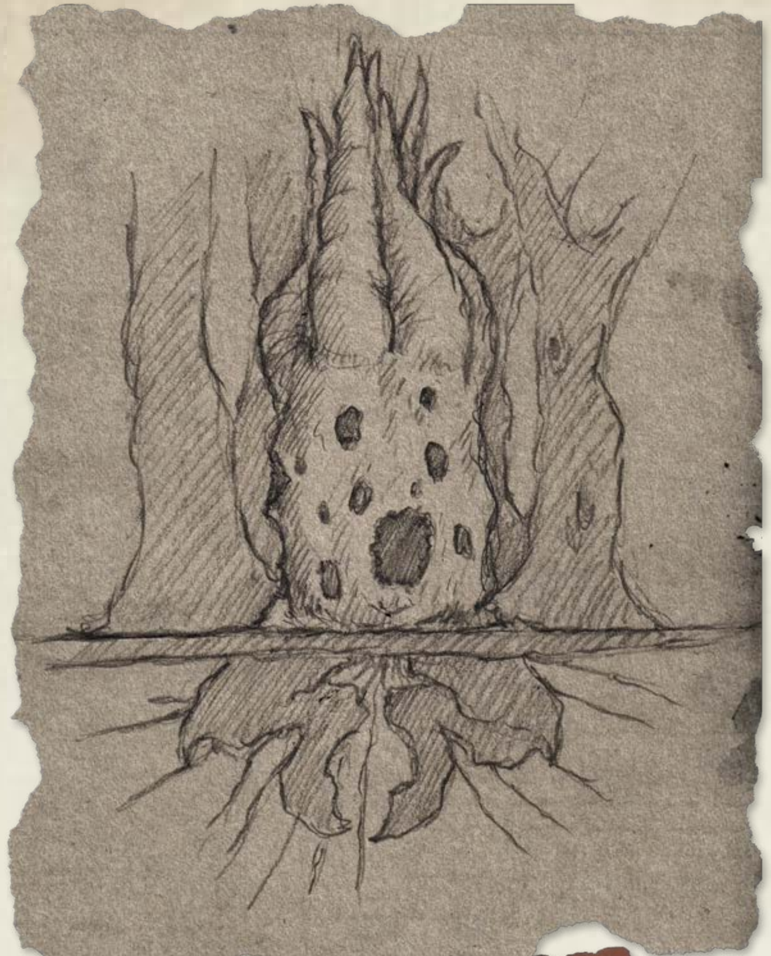
The creature's pores secrete digestive enzymes when pressed, which makes them particularly dangerous to most living organisms. When grasping its prey, a Dark Young will first attempt to constrict it in order to force these enzymes out and onto the victim's body. If the prey survives strangulation and local tissue digestion, the creature will then attempt to dismember it using the serrated mouth-like openings on its body. The longer the struggle, the more enzymes will be released onto the wounded victim's body and into its wounds. Once its prey is small enough, the creature will swallow it to digest over time. Mycelial growths inside the Dark Young's inner body chamber will then passively absorb all nutrients broken down by this process.

If left unbothered for long periods of time, Dark Young will normally burrow their lower limbs and body to feed on soil nutrients, leaving their immobile tentacle crown exposed.

Development:

While not native to our dimension, Dark Young are known to be matter-based creatures. They may only use their nutrients to grow in size, as they are unable to reproduce on their own. Instead, they must be brought forth from different dimensions or regions in space. Their interdimensional growth cycle is not well understood.

Once settled on an Earth location, Dark Young have proven to be incredibly resilient. There is no known limit to how much an individual organism can grow or live under adequate environmental conditions.



Explorer's Note:

Since Dark Young depend on their prey's struggles to release digestive enzymes, remaining immobile is the safest bet when trapped by their tentacles. Dismemberment and evisceration are easier to deal with when one is not being digested.

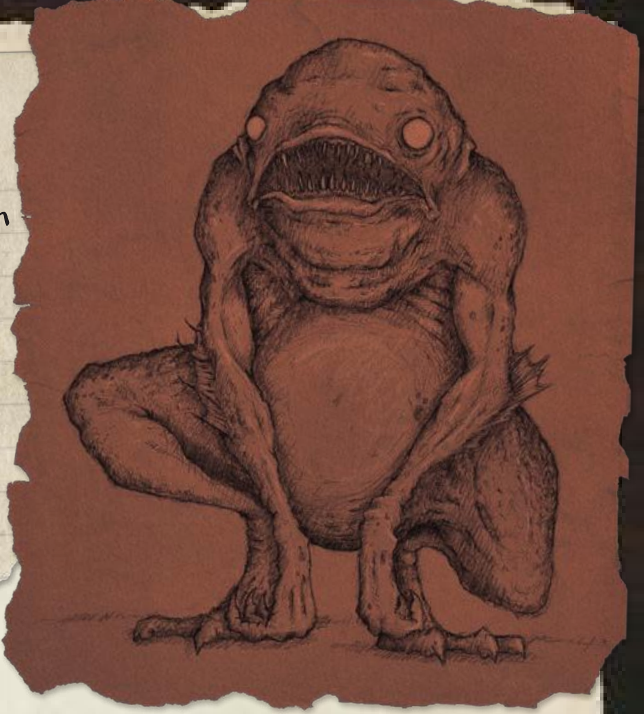
Deep One

Nature: Matter-based humanoid amphibian

Weight: ~80 kg / 175 lb.

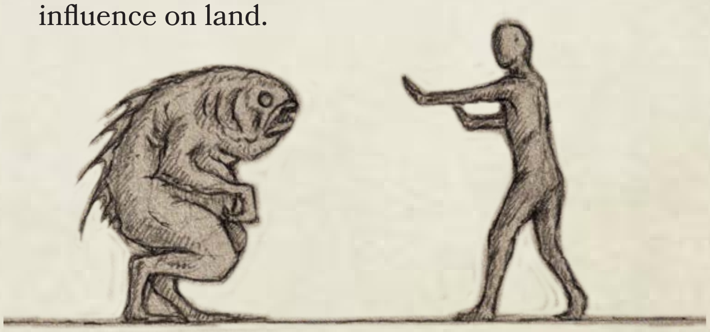
Height: ~1.5 m / 4.9 ft.

Habitat: Earth's oceanic environments, near large coral reefs



Deep Ones are a species of ancient humanoid, artificially bred by the Starspawn. They are intelligent creatures that resemble crouching hominids with batrachian and ichthyic features. They are instinctively social and usually form large colonies where they live, hunt, reproduce, and engage in religious cults. While their interaction with humans is fairly common, that interchange is often kept secret by those in power.

Deep Ones are known to have an intense mating drive, making reproduction their main goal in life. They believe that power can be achieved through numbers above all else. This belief, paired with a natural ability to produce hybrid spawn, makes them seek mates in most vertebrate life forms. Humans, being the current dominant terrestrial species, are of special interest to Deep Ones who seek to expand their influence on land.



Anatomical Features:

Deep Ones resemble most humanoid species, possessing four main body chambers (cranium, thorax, abdomen and pelvis), two forelimbs, and two hindlimbs. Their epidermal layer is covered with scales of different sizes and color that vary between populations. Most Deep Ones also feature various appendages used for display, such as spines, tentacles, and fins.

The creature's overall body structure is sturdy and made for underwater life. When on land, Deep Ones usually slouch, which makes them appear smaller than they are. They feature a muscular torso and a batrachian, round abdomen surrounded by a thin abdominal wall. Their limbs are long and muscular and are usually connected to the body with an elastic membrane. Digits on both hands and feet are also webbed.

A Deep One's face has features that resemble a bizarre mix between hominid, toad, and fish. Their bulbous eyes are usually facing sideways; they lack ears and a nasal bridge, and have large toothed mouths. Large gills can be found on the sides of the creature's wide neck, varying in size and shape.

Dissection shows that their inner organs are more akin to amphibians than fish, which hints to their evolutionary past. The thoracic chamber is mostly filled by a large, lobed liver, a chambered heart and small lungs. There's no thoracic diaphragm muscle to aid in ventilation, which is achieved by the creature's thoracic musculature. Gills are usually large and feature no apparent difference from other chordate amphibians. Their abdominal chamber contains the stomach, small intestine, elongated kidneys, gonads, and large intestine. The pelvis mostly contains the rectum, bladder, and cloaca.

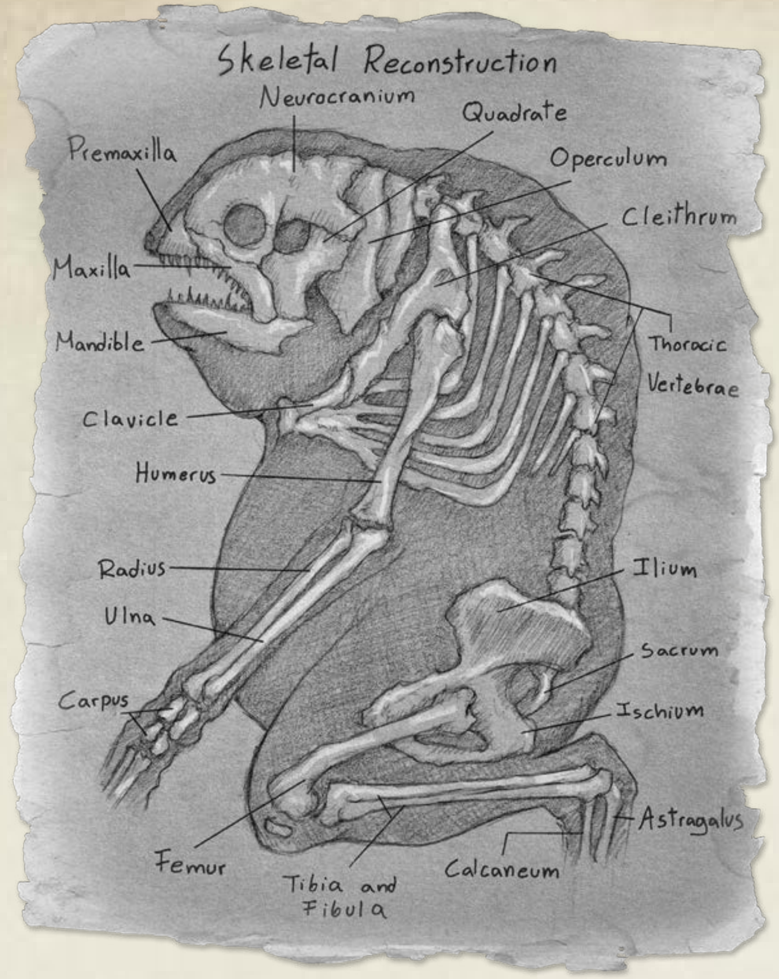
Their limbs have the same muscular distribution as modern tetrapods. Interestingly, most bones never ossify completely, leaving a permanent growth metaphysis even in older individuals.

Brain dissection shows higher development of the subjects' limbic and paralimbic structures as well as the parietal and occipital lobes. The prefrontal cortex is relatively underdeveloped for an intelligent species.

Biology & Ecology:

Deep Ones are highly intelligent creatures and possess culture, language, and other complex behaviors. Even if they appear to be hominins, evolutionary studies have not been able to find a natural explanation to their particular traits and physiological functions. So far, their unusual nature has been vaguely explained by folklorists who have studied the ancient cults of Cthulhu in remote populations and obscure archaeological sites. Their findings suggest that Deep Ones were the result of artificial breeding and tissue-grafting exercises performed by the Starspawn around the time of the Pleistocene epoch. While the purpose of creating such creatures remains a matter of debate, it could be possible that they were intended to mediate (and eventually dominate) interactions with the many rising species of hominins.

Deep Ones are not physically extraordinary in any sense, other than their highly adaptive generalist traits. Because of this, they are known to be able to survive in any non-polar environment, though they clearly prefer tropical seas. While rare, at least one expedition has reported Deep One fossils in Antarctica's fossil deposits (suggesting they were interested in colonizing this region at some point in their history).



While their general body plan makes them quite adaptive, Deep Ones' ecologic success seems to be linked to their incomparable ability to interbreed with other organisms, provided that they are large enough to undergo the mating process. The exact mechanism for how this ability works is still unknown, but may be related to the highly adaptive histocompatibility complex found on the creatures' gametes, which easily mimics that of the host parent. Additional evidence suggests the existence of a genetic "hijacking" mechanism found on genes from the creature's X chromosome. Theoretically, these genes would be able to use the host's DNA to progressively replace the original genome with Deep One sequences. As more cells become genetic mosaics, the process accelerates exponentially until most tissues feature 26 Deep One diploid chromosomes. Scholars have suggested that this highly efficient interbreeding mechanism could not have been the result of natural selection and is, instead, the work of unfathomably advanced bioengineering.

Deep Ones are instinctively social creatures, and their culture and habits reflect this. They usually settle in large reef ecosystems, preferably near deep and complex caverns. Large colonies modify the natural scenery with additional tunnels and large structures adorned with marine life such as corals and anemones. These underground structures usually contain large, communal spawning pools and temples dedicated to various marine gods. Some caverns may also be adorned with treasures and human remains collected from shipwrecks.

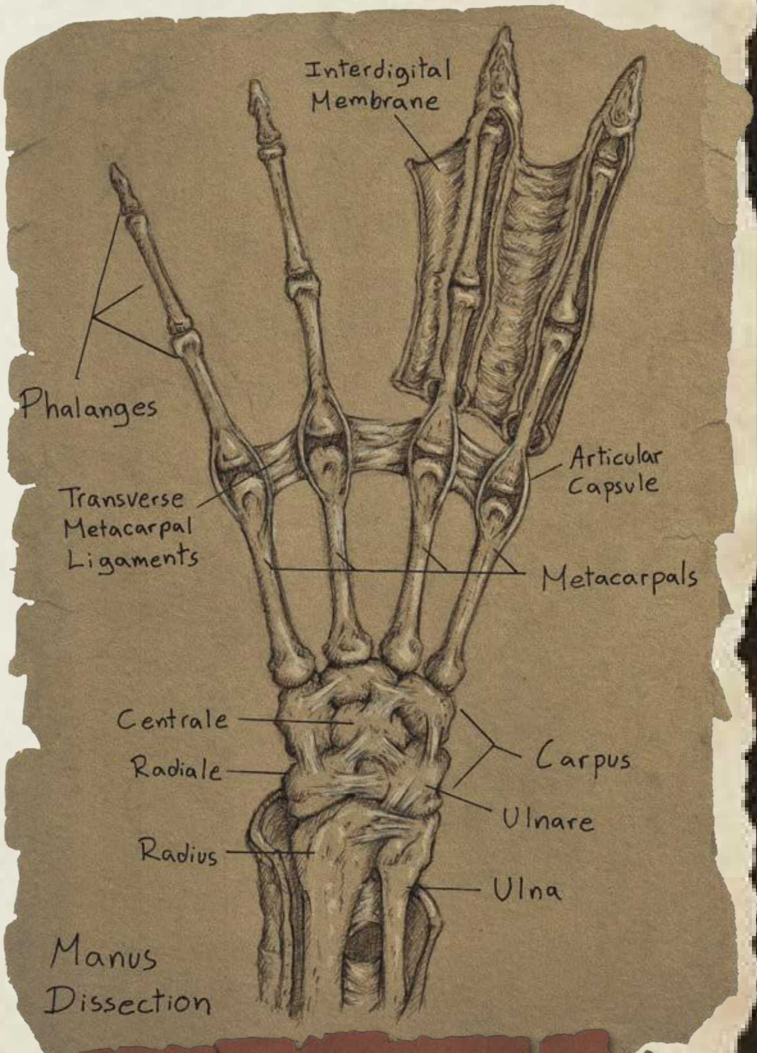
Deep One culture is almost always centered on colonization and reproduction. Their basic cultural paradigm revolves around overrunning and dominating other species. Due to their versatility, they have effectively spread throughout the world's oceans but, since their ability to survive on land is limited, they actively seek to colonize the surface through interbreeding.

Unlike most animals, humans rarely need to be forced to interbreed with Deep Ones. Instead, the creatures will offer large amounts of seafood and strange golden jewelry in exchange for the human leader's friendship. Once humans become dependent on Deep One tributes, they will gradually be exhorted to build temples to their deities (usually centered around Starspawn, Cthulhu, and lesser sea creatures like Dagon) and begin interbreeding.

Development:

"Pure bred" Deep Ones are born from eggs laid in spawning pools within deep reef tunnels. They usually require nutrient-rich environments to develop appropriately, so only healthy corals are chosen as reproductive sites. The egg will hatch a small and limbless Deep One larva that will slowly grow and develop limbs. Ossification is never really complete but slows down after about 10 years.

Adults have no real limit to their growth, so their size depends on their ability to feed. Isolated populations that settle on nutrient-poor environments usually feature "dwarf" Deep Ones that rely on less energy to thrive, while other populations may spawn larger, more energy-consuming individuals. Additionally, their fast mitotic activity is supplemented by a strong genetic repair mechanism that makes their age, theoretically, unlimited. As a result of these factors, ancient, overfed Deep Ones have been known to be whale-sized and worshipped as lesser gods by their brethren.



Manus Dissection

Explorer's Note:

Deep Ones never draw the short straw when striking a deal with humans, so contacting them is not recommended. Still, some cults have developed artifacts to attract them to the surface in hopes of reaching ill-fated agreements.

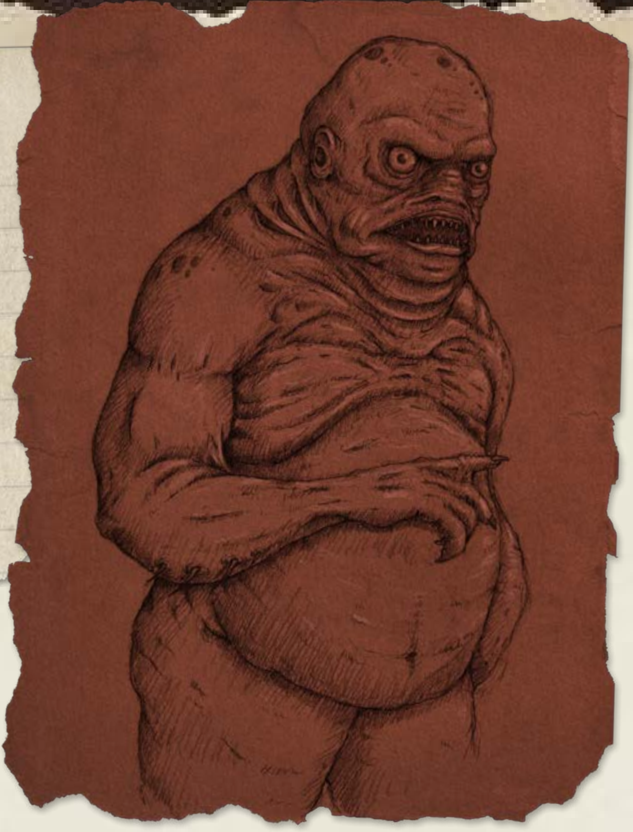
Deep One Hybrid

Nature: Matter-based humanoid hybrid

Weight: ~90 kg / 200 lb.

Height: ~1.7 m / 5.6 ft.

Habitat: Near Deep One settlements, usually inhabiting decadent coastal towns



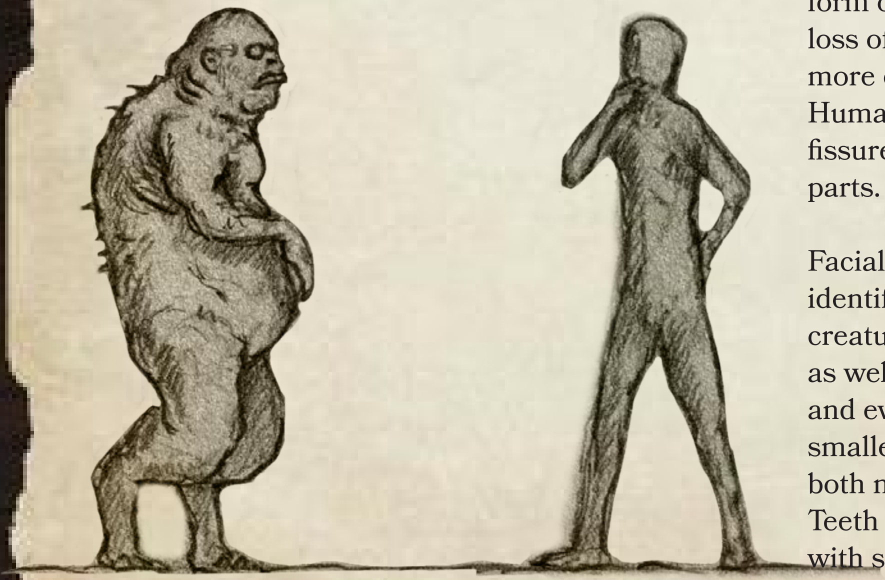
Hybrid populations are the natural consequence of animal groups coexisting near Deep One reefs. These are not necessarily human, as Deep Ones are known to interbreed with most size-compatible organisms, from mollusks to chordates. Regardless, most hybrids are easily identified while in mid-transformation due to their monstrous appearance and morose behavior. With time, all hybrids either die due to failed mutations or become successful Deep One-like creatures that return to the sea and live with their brethren.

Anatomical Features:

A Deep One hybrid's anatomical description is always unique, since many different factors lead to one body plan or another. Some of these factors include the species of the non-Deep One, or alternative, parent, the subject's age, and its own intrinsic mutation process. As a general rule, a hybrid's body plan usually resembles that of the alternative parent and gradually acquires Deep One features. The following descriptions will focus on humanoid Deep One hybrids.

Relatively young hybrids show very vague traits that could differentiate them from their non-hybrid kin. These usually include a light form of hypertelorism, a short neck, and early loss of body hair. As the creature grows older, more evident signs of mutation begin to appear. Human hybrids can be identified by a small fissure that separates the upper maxilla in two parts.

Facial mutations are usually the easiest to identify once the process is well underway. The creature's eyes grow more and more bulged as well as further apart and its eyelids atrophy and eventually disappear. Its ears become smaller and leave vestigial remnants while both mouth and lips grow larger and stiffer. Teeth will decay and fall as they are replaced with smaller, pointier teeth. The mandible and



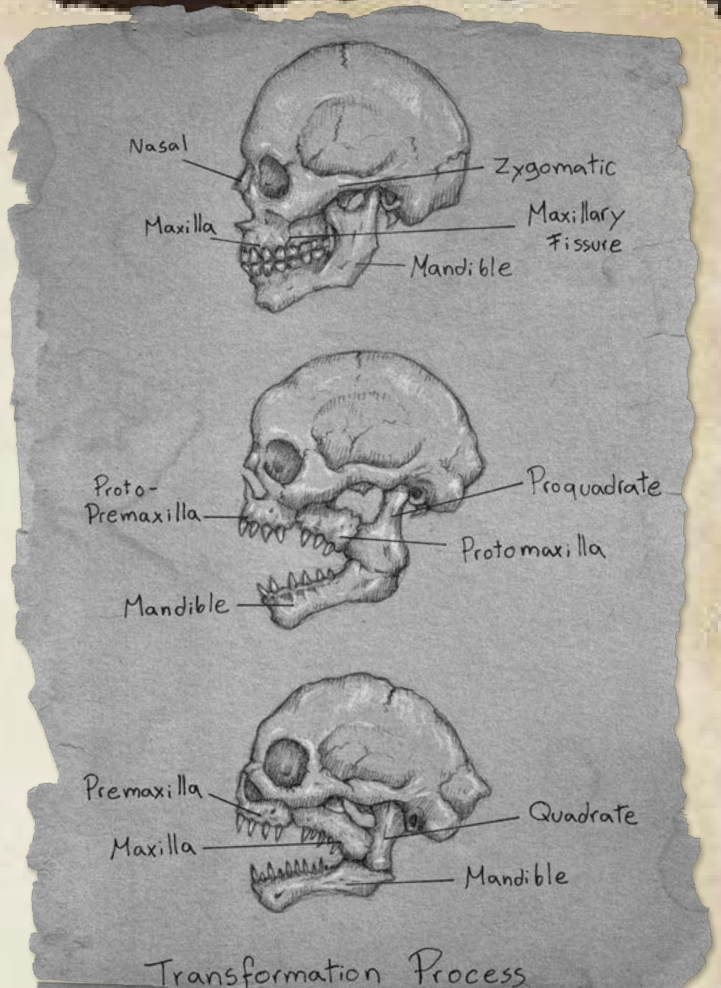
upper maxillary bone eventually break into a composite jaw, similar to that of a fish. This mutation usually consumes the creature's middle-ear bones, leaving only a primitive stapes connected to a thick eardrum. Finally, the sides of its neck will form skin folds that gradually form true gills.

While not as evident at first sight, other body mutations also develop early on. Skin flaps will grow around the limbs and eventually form interdigital and brachial membranes. Acanthosis of the skin will gradually develop true scales around the creature's face, back, and limbs. Non-mutated skin patches may remain for some time but eventually fall off. Spine erector muscles will atrophy, while thoracic muscles will grow larger. Some cases may also show unnatural fusion or atrophy of bony structures such as ribs.

Dissection of dead hybrids suggests that internal changes happen even before more superficial mutations. These are usually centered on the heart and gut, but eventually compromise the creature's lungs and liver.

Biology & Ecology:

The specific details of a hybrids' physiology will strongly depend on the alternative parent's species and its own individual mutation process. However, some patterns have been observed in most subjects. For instance, young hybrids always resemble their alternative parent and show little genetic Deep One material. This genetic composition is gradually changed as the creature develops and more Deep One genes become active. Among other mutations, hybrids will develop an overactive endocrine system that will cause intense anxiety and anguish. Symptoms usually include hypnopompic hallucinations and delirium. Eventually, the creature will be instinctively drawn to Deep One nests and shun surface life altogether.


Nasal
Zygomatic
Maxilla
Maxillary Fissure
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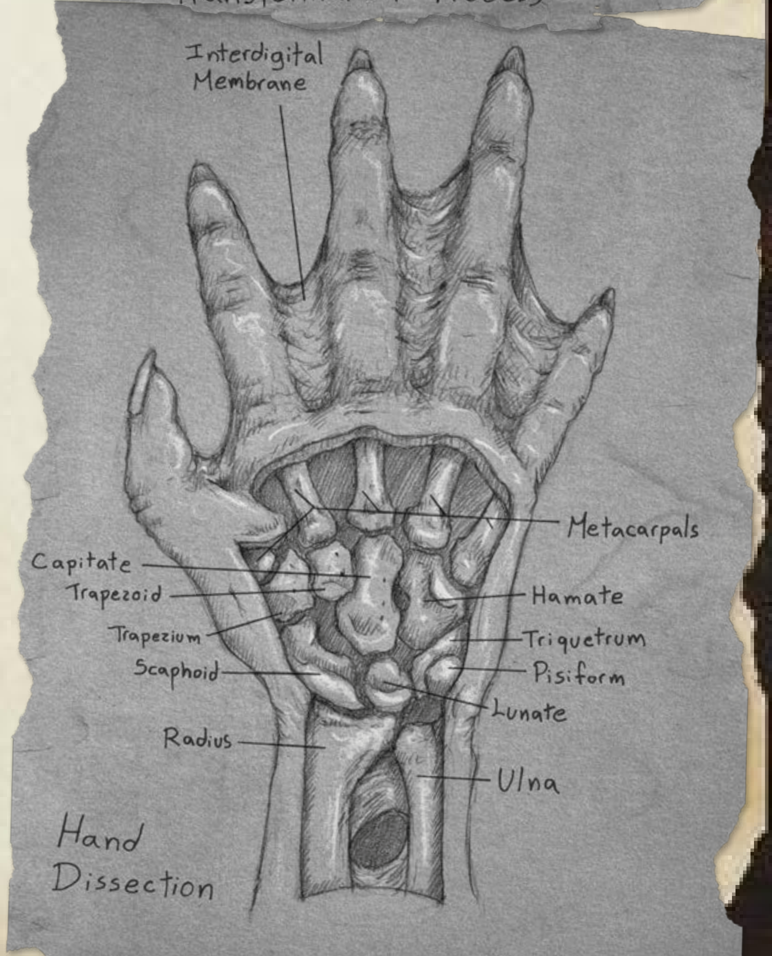
Transformation Process

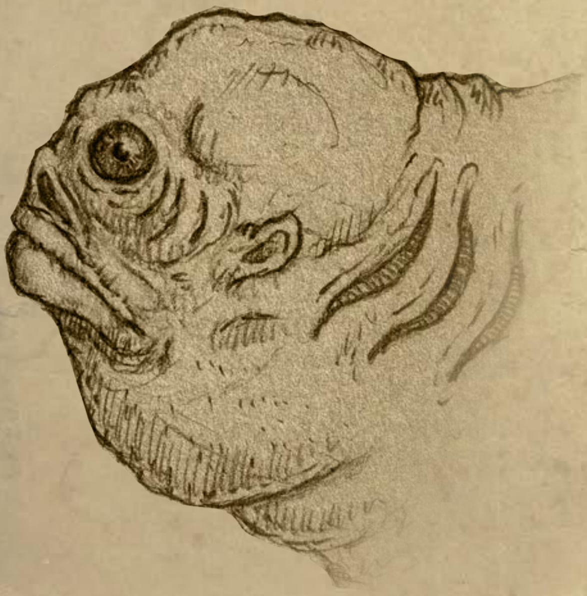

Interdigital Membrane
Metacarpals
Capitate
Trapezoid
Hamate
Trapezium
Triquetrum
Scaphoid
Pisiform
Lunate
Radius
Ulna
Hand Dissection

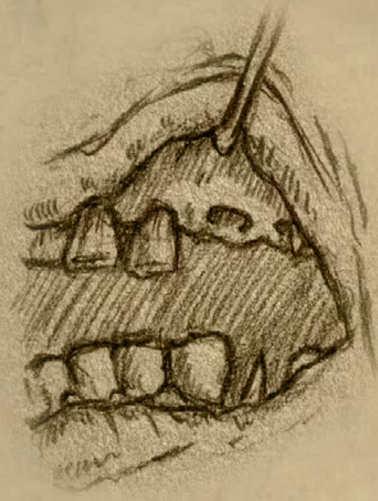
Development:

At first, hybrids develop at the normal rate of their alternative parent's species. Once the mutations begin, their development accelerates exponentially. Initial mutations center on inner organs and are not usually perceived by the hybrid's kin.

Gene-protecting mechanisms located in the X chromosome help cut through undesired genetic sequences to facilitate new adaptations. This mechanism gradually transforms the tissue's cellular composition into a genetic mosaic of the hybrid, eventually forcing it to adopt an amphibious way of life. Interestingly, humans' p53 gene is very similar in structure to the Deep One genetic splicing gene. This has led some cryptoanthropologists to suggest modern humans may have a common hybrid ancestor.

It has been observed that non-hybrid mates of Deep Ones also develop mutations with time. This means that not all hybrids are the result of interbreeding, but can also result from prolonged exposure to the creatures (albeit to a lesser extent). This phenomenon seems to be caused by physical contact between the subject's mucosae and Deep One secretions. While the exact mechanism of these types of mutations is still debated, microbiologists have suggested that some form of lentivirus might have the ability to infect the host with segments of the Deep One's splicing gene.





Explorer's Note:

Human hybrids may live a couple decades before any noticeable change occurs. Explorers who dwell near Deep One dens, or have inherited strange golden jewelry, should make a habit of checking the mirror every now and then.

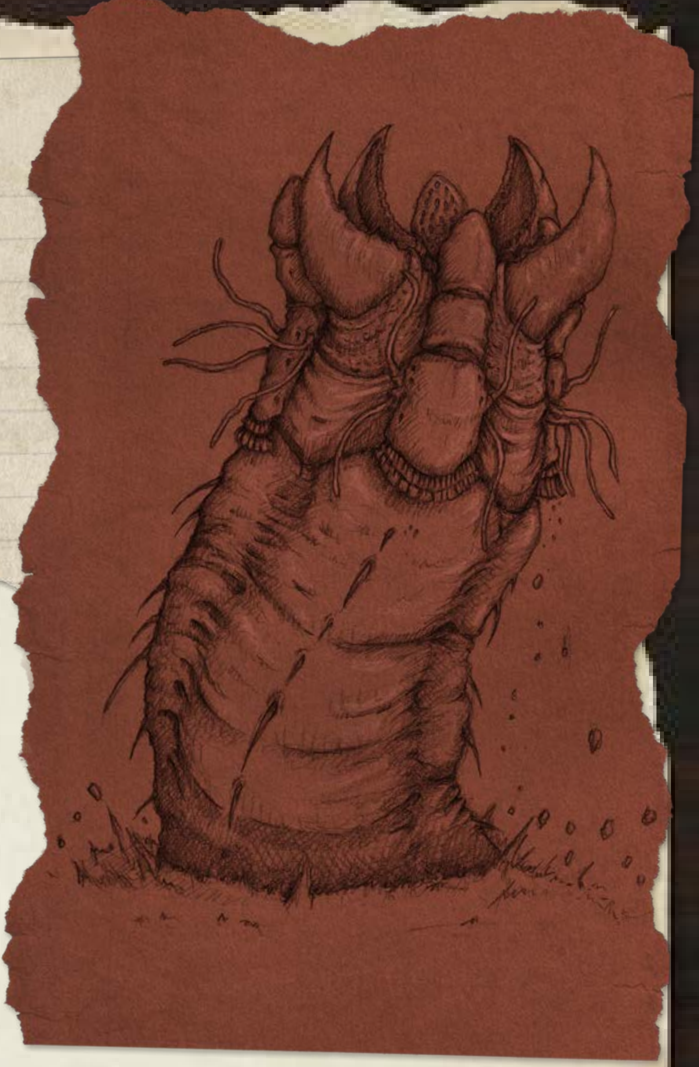
Dhole

Nature: Matter-based interdimensional worm

Weight: Unknown

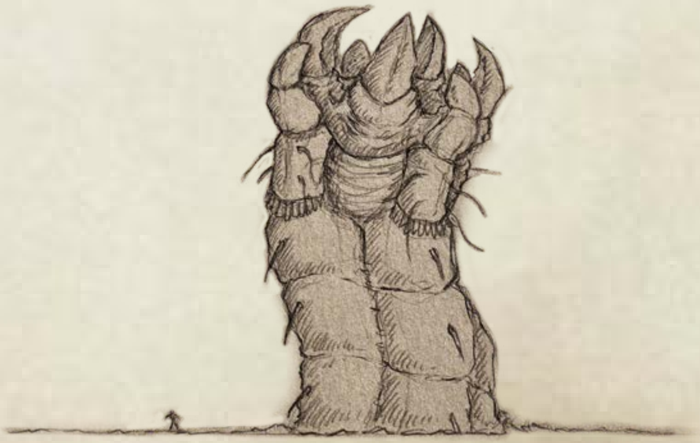
Height: >100 m / >330 ft.

Habitat: Geologically active planets



Usually seen as planetary-scale death sentences, Dholes are some of the universe's largest known matter-based creatures. They resemble gigantic worms with large toothed mouths that burrow underground and emerge to feed off any living organisms they may find. Many civilizations, including the highly advanced Yadith, are known to have fought Dhole infestations with moderate degrees of success. Still, all planets known to have fostered Dholes eventually become little more than lifeless rocks.

A planet with a small Dhole infestation may survive for eons without losing its geothermal activity and magnetosphere, but larger infestations usually derive in an absolute disruption of the planet's environment. This inevitable outcome, added to the creatures' unpredictable behavior, make evacuation the only certain way to ensure the civilization's survival of an infested planet.



Anatomical Features:

Dholes feature an overall worm-like appearance with some polychaete features. They are usually gigantic and have no known growth limit. Some of the largest measured individuals are a couple hundred meters long. While they feature the same general structure, different Dhole species show different phenotypic adaptations, depending on their environment.

The creatures' head and mouth usually present the most noticeable variations, which can be useful when identifying strains, but causes them to be harder to describe. Some common characteristics for adult Dholes are four prostomial segments (which include sensory organs), a set of palps and large chitinous mandibles attached to an eversible pharynx. Different acquired traits can include large, ossified jaws, tongue-like probosces or hypertrophic palps. All species show some form of gill-slit behind each prostomium, usually covered by vascularized external gills.

The Dhole's skin is very coarse and thick and features ring-like folds along the whole body. Most adults develop dorsal and ventral cirri to help them burrow. These appendages vary in complexity depending on the individual's species and age.

The larval stage of a Dhole is called a Bhole, and can be identified by some of its characteristic traits. The Bhole has a long maggot-like body with large toothed palps that act as jaws. Its pharynx cannot be everted, and its mandibles are underdeveloped. Its sensory organs are primitive, and it has internal gill-like organs instead of mature, external gills. A Bhole's skin is characteristically slimy, pale, and thinner than that of the adult Dhole.

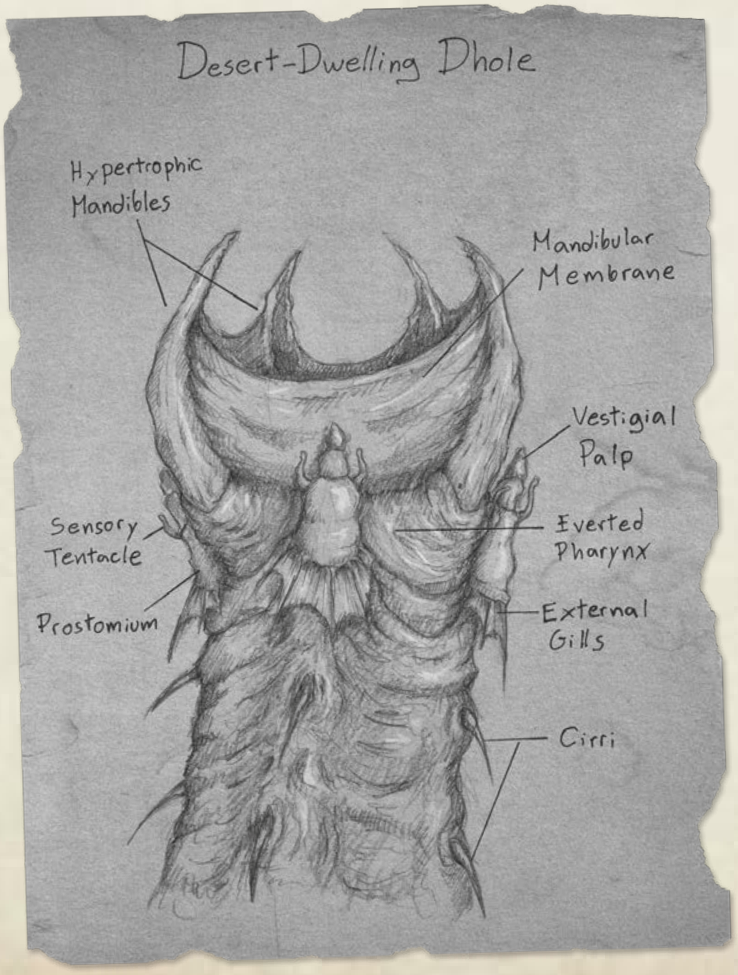
Dissecting a Dhole is a titanic quest not only because it implies finding a dead subject (or successfully killing one), but also cutting through its incredibly resistant integuments. A transversal dissection shows that the creature has two layers of muscle (inner longitudinal and outer circular muscles) and no backbone. Lunged species have a vestigial left lung and an elongated right lung near their cephalic end and a large digestive system that extends towards the caudal end. Blood is pumped via two main arteries (dorsal and ventral) that connect to the creature's six hearts.

Biology & Ecology:

Dholes are intergalactic creatures that spend their adult life feeding off planetary organisms in our dimension. Because their larval stage is spent in the Dreamlands, there's debate on whether they originated there or in the waking world. However, some astrobiologists defend neither position and instead claim that they must have first evolved somewhere in deep space, near the center of our universe, where the boundaries of different dimensions collide. They are not social creatures and are even known to attack their peers if resources are scarce or if an intruding Dhole attempts to occupy another's burrow. Their metabolism is based on absorbing heat from the planet's geothermal activity and consuming nutrients from organic material on the surface.

Massive Dhole infestations eventually lead to the disruption of the planet's tectonic and geothermal activity, causing colossal quakes and, in the long run, the dissipation of its atmosphere due to a weakened magnetosphere.

Dholes have undeveloped brains with no perceivable cognition. In spite of this, their brain seems to be able to project a dream image that allows the creature to instinctively manifest in the Dreamlands dimension. This projection is always involuntary but has become an important part of the Dhole's reproductive cycle (see below). It is unknown if mature adults can project to the Dreamlands with other purposes.



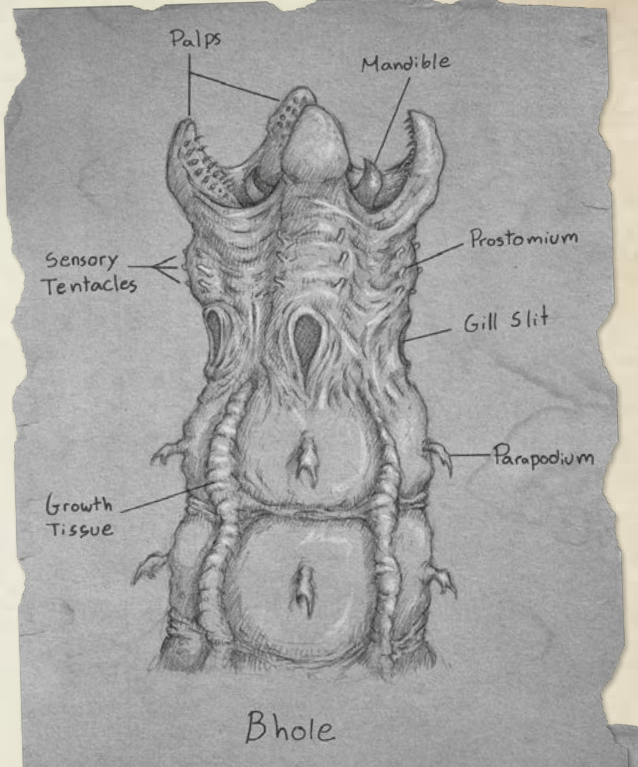
Development:

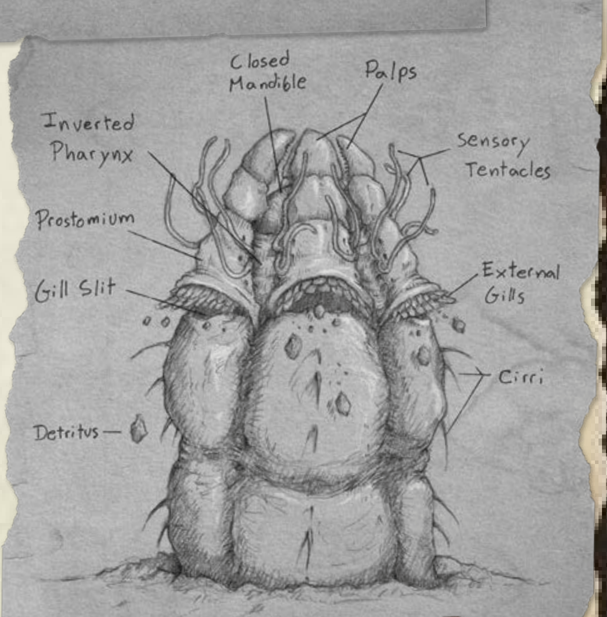
Dholes are indirect planetary parasites. While their final hosts are waking-world planets, they use the Dreamlands dimension as an intermediate host.

Adult creatures are synchronous hermaphrodites, possessing both ovaries and testes. When environmental conditions allow it (thanks to good nutrition and sufficient energy), the Dhole will self-fertilize and develop hundreds of viable eggs. A hormone produced by the fertilized eggs (dubbed oneirogenin by astrobiologists) will trigger a dream-like state in the gravid creature, projecting it into the Dreamlands' underground tunnels. Once the creature deposits its eggs, the fall of oneirogenin concentration in plasma will return the Dhole's brain activity to normal, effectively terminating the projection.

Dhole eggs hatch and release smaller larval creatures called "Bholes". These will passively feed on energy emanated from the Dreamlands' underground caverns until they are large enough to feed on organic creatures. Their diet usually includes Ghasts, Ghouls, Gugs, and humanoid dreamers. A juvenile Bhole may grow to around 100 meters (~330 ft) before maturing into an adult Dhole. Once it reaches maturity, the Bhole's brainwave patterns become unable to sustain its dream projection, thus transporting it to the waking world. This whole cycle may take hundreds or even thousands of years to complete.

It is unknown how Dholes pass from living in the Dreamlands to infesting waking world planets, but it has been noted that planets with higher concentrations of dreamers are more susceptible to infestation. This has led to the theory that planets that host large concentrations of dream-traveling creatures (such as humanoid dreamers, cats, Ghouls, etc.) may permeate the barrier between dimensions. A dream Dhole that's projecting back to the waking world might do so more easily through places where the dimensional barrier has been weakened or blurred by intense oneiric activity. Artificial or accidental infestation is also possible through forceful manipulation of space-time.





Explorer's Note:

Wounding or killing a Dhole usually causes involuntary spasms throughout its body that lead to intense seismic activity.

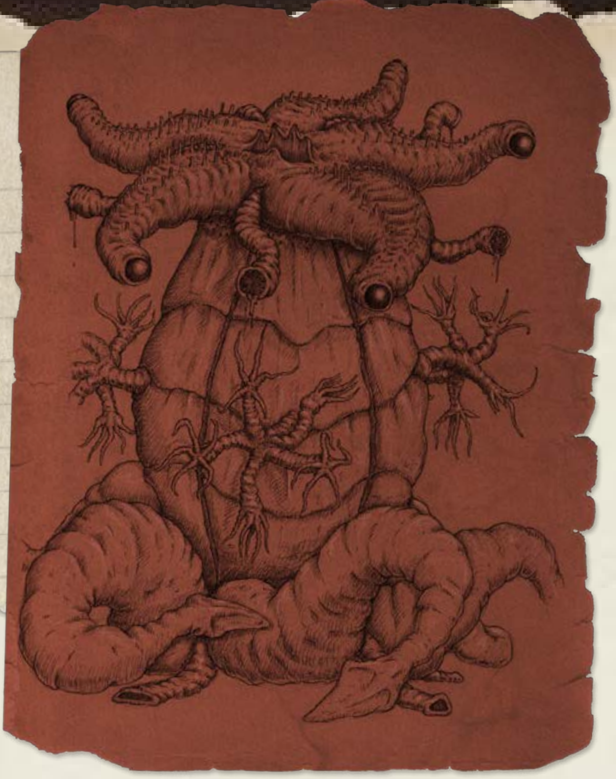
Elder Thing

Nature: Matter-based intergalactic explorer

Weight: ~200 kg / 240 lb.

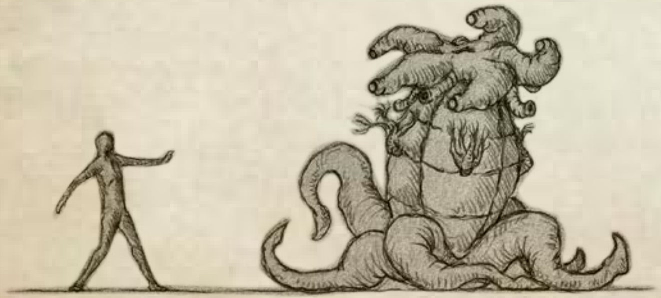
Height: ~2.5 m / 8 ft.

Habitat: Tropical planetary environments. Last known Terrestrial habitat is in present-day Antarctica.



Elder Things are one of the most advanced three-dimensional creatures in our known universe. Their general body plan includes features from both plants and animals, possessing a winged, barrel-shaped body, a starfish-like head, and strong tentacular limbs. They owe their bizarre appearance to their alien nature, as they first evolved in deep space before the formation of our solar system.

True intergalactic explorers, Elder Things (or Old Ones according to some texts) are known to be spacefarers capable of survival in the most hostile environments. They are thought to have colonized Earth during the Archean eon, when they created what would eventually become Terrestrial life. Advanced as they might be, Elder Things are limited by their material nature and are at serious disadvantage when in conflict with more complex beings such as Starspawn and Fungi from Yuggoth. This led the spacefaring ancestors of Terrestrial Elder Things to create the Elder Signs: Ancient sigil artifacts that disrupt dimensional barriers to fend off transdimensional beings.



Anatomical Features:

Elder Things' bodies are divided into three main segments: The cephalic complex, the main stalk, and the caudal complex. They feature a pentameric distribution and combine biological characteristics of both animals and plants.

The cephalic complex features a flexible head that resembles a five-pointed star. The tips of the five head projections each contain a spherical visual organ, while their topmost side is lined with multicolored ciliary prolongations that extend all the way to the head's central opening. The head's inner angles project thin, hose-like proboscides with bell-shaped openings that contain sharp teeth. At the bottom of the cephalic complex is the "neck" region that can be extended to show the creature's gills.

The main stalk is barrel-shaped and divided into five leathery, longitudinal segments. The division between each of these body segments contains a pocket that holds one of the creature's five membranous wings. An Elder Thing's wings are fairly large and lined with spore-bearing tubular structures. Around the stalk's equator and sprouting from each of the body segments are five crinoid-like arms. Each arm branches into five tentacles, which, in turn, branch into five smaller, delicate tentacles (tentilla) for a total of 25 tentacles per arm.

The Elder Thing's caudal complex features five strong and flexible limbs showing radial symmetry that emerge from the stalk's caudal disk. Each arm is notably muscular, covered in thick, flexible skin and lacking any appendages other than a triangularly shaped fin located at its tip. Five hose-like tubes, similar to the ones on the cephalic complex, grow between the arms. These tubes are thin and retractable like their cephalic counterparts but lack teeth.

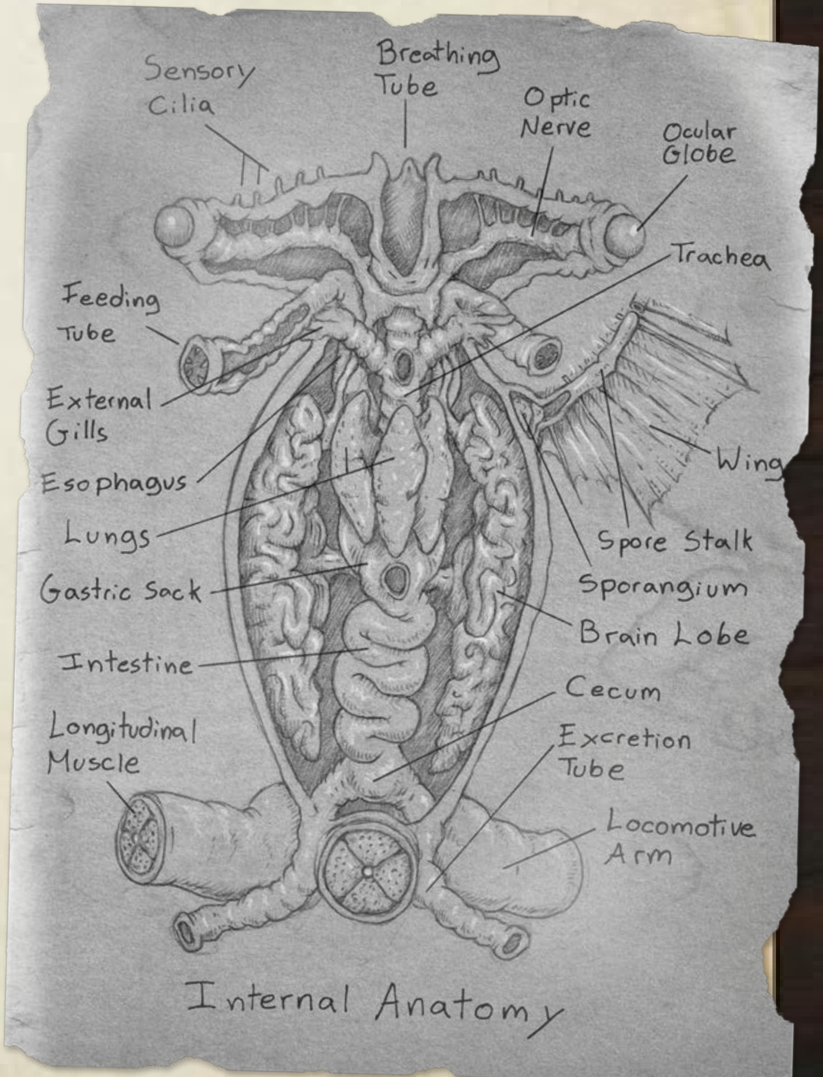
Dissection of an Elder Thing is hard due to their sturdiness and ambiguity of their inner structures. So far, anatomists have identified what seem to be respiratory, circulatory, nervous, and reproductive systems in frozen or mummified samples. The central nervous system occupies most of the stalk's inner chamber and is divided into five interconnected lobes with multiple sensory ganglia that connect to the eyes and ciliary projections of the cephalic complex. A set of five lungs branch from a central trachea-like breathing tube connected to the head's opening. The digestive system is connected to the five mouthparts that emerge from the head and ends in the four excretion tubes that emerge from the caudal complex. Spore-bearing organs are attached to the inner body wall and connect directly with each wing.

Biology & Ecology:

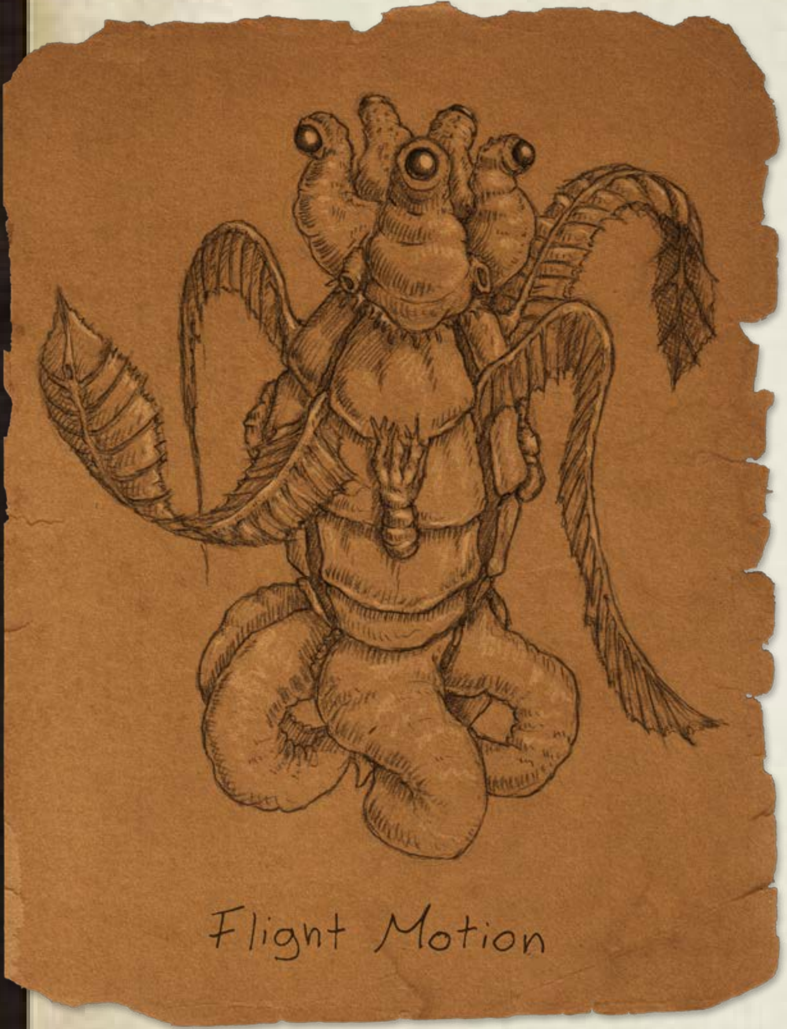
Elder Thing structure resembles echinoderms, while their physiology is more akin to sea anemones and other cnidarians. But, stranger still, some of their metabolic processes seem more in line with plant physiology than any other known animal, making these creatures harder to understand.

Unlike anemones, the opening on top of an Elder Thing's head is not a mouth, but the end of the creature's breathing tube, which takes air through the tracheal canal and into the lungs. Its respiratory system is poorly understood but appears able to rapidly switch between breathing through lungs, gills or pores at will. While most of their metabolism seems to be aerobic, their tissues can switch to anaerobic energy production in an instant. This process seems to be mediated by the chloroplast organelles found in their outer tissues.

The five toothed, hose-like structures on the head are mouths used for feeding on protein-rich sources. These flexible tubes are able to fully retract and are connected to the creature's internal digestive system. Unlike humans, Elder Things prefer to feed on living or recently deceased prey to ensure a higher nutritional value. Food waste is then excreted through the caudal complex's eliminatory organs.



The Elder Things' wing structures vary from time to time and from population to population. For instance, spacefaring (a.k.a., primitive) Elder Things have well-developed wings and larger, sturdier morphotypes. In contrast, more modern individuals tend to show an overall wing atrophy, which would make them useless beyond Earth's atmosphere. Besides motility, the creatures' wings serve a reproductive function in storing and disseminating spores.



The creatures' branching arms are used for tasks that require dexterity and care. They are commonly used for scientific, mechanic, and artistic activities that don't rely on brute strength. In contrast, their caudal limbs are used for motility and gross-motricity tasks like defense, climbing, or moving large objects.

Though of alien origin, Elder Things continued their evolution while under the environmental pressures of Earth's changing climates. These differences can be seen in different populations of Elder Things. Underwater colonies have more developed gills and larger wings while terrestrial groups show stronger caudal limbs and larger eyes. In a similar manner, larger societies usually retain advanced scientific and artistic practices, while isolated populations show feral characteristics due to progressive degeneration. Subspecies show different adaptations to their environment, such as changes in eye size, teeth distribution, and, in degenerate species, signs of malnutrition and genetic disorders.

While Elder Things are highly intelligent and sociable creatures, they voluntarily avoid using technology and instead focus on their physical and artistic skills. Because of this, their dwellings appear relatively simple and are often decorated with pictograms representing their history and culture. As should be expected, their furniture is bizarre looking for bilaterians, but would make sense for pentameric radiates.

History on Earth:

Most cultural and ecologic information regarding Elder Things was gathered during a doomed Antarctic expedition that stumbled upon the ruins of a settlement preserved under the polar ice. The massive city, dated to the Cretaceous period, is the only known archaeological record of their civilization (literally, frozen in time). While the city's inhabitants were long dead, their history remained carved into the buildings' walls.

The creatures are believed to have arrived on Earth more than three billion years ago and immediately began terraforming the then-barren planet. Through bioengineering, they developed highly adaptable forms of protoplasmic creatures, known as Shoggoths, to aid them in the construction of their underwater cities. By the time the Elder Things moved out of the oceans, the planet's surface was already teeming with wildlife that was repurposed as food or domesticated as beasts of burden. Some sources even suggest that the Old Ones then artificially selected some primates and created hominins to serve as slaves and jesters.

It is safe to assume the Antarctic city was not originally meant to lie on the planet's pole. Instead, the city was probably built in the equatorial regions of Gondwana, where stable climate patterns favored the creatures' metabolism. However, when the supercontinent broke off from the Americas, the massive city would have been slowly pushed south as the continent of Antarctica formed.

So, why didn't the Old Ones abandon their (then) polar city? First, they were probably unable to do so because of alien occupation. Competition with Fungi from Yuggoth and Starspawn posed a serious threat to the matter-based Elder Things, who were gradually pushed back into isolation. Second, the Antarctic continent was quite rich in resources millions of years before the polar ice caps formed, so there was no reason to move out.

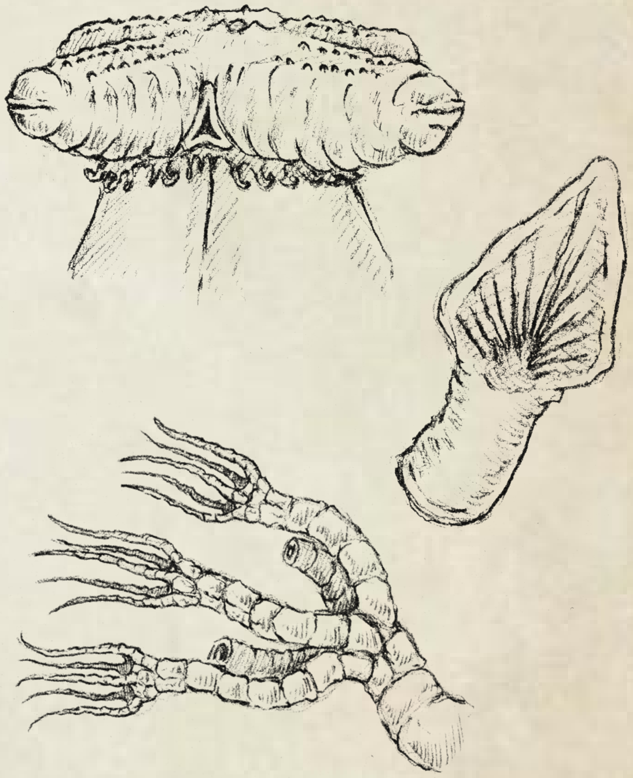
Eventually, as continental drifts altered the planet's oceanic currents and Antarctica began to freeze, Elder Things tried to abandon the planet but failed due to their derived adaptations for life on Earth. With time, climate change, war and a massive Shoggoth uprising brought an end to the last remaining colonies.

Development:

Elder Things reproduce through spores stored inside their wings. The tubular axes that hold the wing together are very porous and can be used to disseminate spores through flight. However, it must me noted that most individuals don't reproduce unless an active colonization process is underway.

Young Elder Things are grown in specialized breeding facilities and educated in arts and sciences by mentoring adults. The concept of family is alien to them, so they never get to know their parents or family group. Instead, leisure groups are formed based on preference, aptitudes, and assigned tasks. From a young age, Elder Things are able to communicate through pipe-like melodies and create simple pictograms that tell their own stories.

Nutrition is based on a balanced diet mainly consisting of animal protein. Throughout Earth's history, this protein has been obtained from whatever animal was bred and captured by the colony and included arthropods, therapsids, archosaurs, and mammals.



Explorer's Note:

Elder Things are highly intelligent and curious creatures. They seem to be passionate about science, art, and history and are known to have shown empathy towards their brethren even in the harshest conditions. In a strange and parallel way, they are humane.

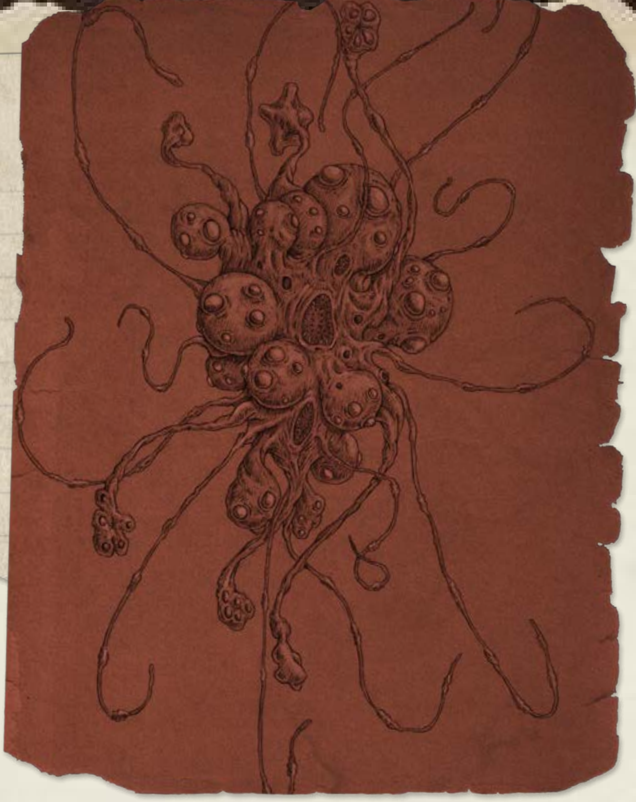
Flying Polyp

Nature: Multidimensional predator

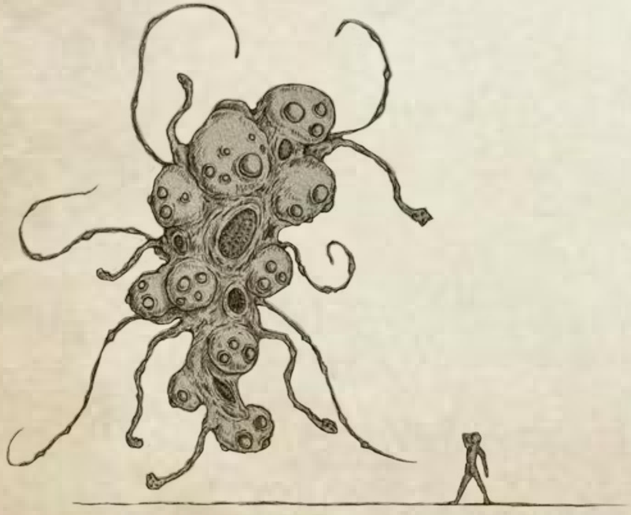
Weight: ~ 400 kg / 880 lb.

Height: ~ 6 m / 20 ft.

Habitat: Basalt edifices built on civilization-hosting planets



Flying Polyps are some of the most feared interdimensional predators known to have inhabited the Earth. They get their name from their strange physical appearance, which loosely resembles a floating polyp-like organism filled with sensory organs. However, seeing these creatures is practically impossible since most entities are functionally blind to their presence. These ravenous predators arrived at our planet in primeval times, probably near the end of the Proterozoic eon (~600 million years ago) and viciously fed on all life they could find. Their ability to remain undetected by most organisms and their use of violent gusts of wind made them almost unbeatable adversaries to other advanced civilizations coexisting on the planet. In the end, their large basalt buildings became their own prisons when the Great Race of Yith devised a way to neutralize them and keep them trapped underground for millennia.



Anatomical Features:

A Flying Polyp's general body plan resembles a group of sessile polyps emerging from a single core. Each boulbous structure has multiple spherical sensory organs of different sizes. Though they may look like eyes these organs are not photosensitive, and are believed to be used for other, yet unknown, senses. The creature's core contains siphon-like openings and multiple mouths, or ostia, covered in countless sharp teeth.

Numerous long tentacles sprout from the creature's core, passively floating around it as if underwater. Each tentacle has small knobs that are almost undetectable at plain sight. Overall, these appendages have been divided into stabilizing and motor tentacles. Stabilizers are usually long and delicate, while motor tentacles are thicker and are tipped with five rounded, fleshy "digits".

Dissecting this creature by traditional means should be avoided as regular blades cannot penetrate its hide. Instead, a well-calibrated hyfrecator can make clean incissions with little resistance. Exploration of the polypous structures reveal neuronal tissue organized into ganglionic structures. Close examination of these shows that efferent cells receive impulses from the sensory organs and afferent cells send impulses to the body and other ganglions. Interestingly, the creature's cells have no identifiable nuclei or other DNA-bearing organelle.

A careful dissection of the tentacles' knobs shows that they are composed of a spiraling tissue that glows vaguely when exposed to blacklight. The same tissue can be found forming a larger organoid inside the Flying Polyp's digits. Some anatomists have dubbed this structure the "spiroid organ".

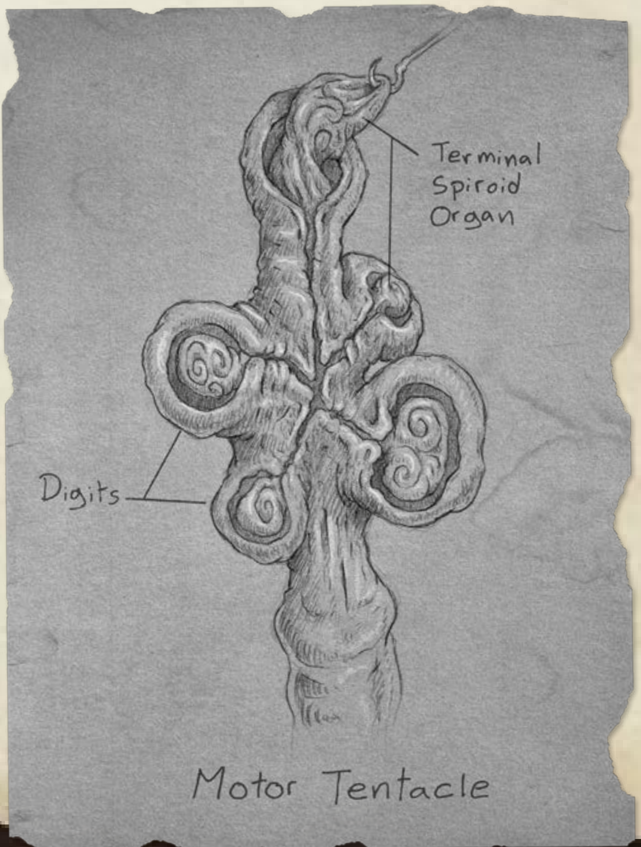
Biology & Ecology:

Flying Polyps are partially composed of regular matter and partially composed of other unknown particles. They are apparently transdimensional and can simultaneously interact with different planes beyond space-time. This makes Flying Polyps hard to study, as some of their components exist outside our dimensional limits. For instance, some cryptobiologists have suggested that the creature's cells must have a nucleus, but that they exist in a different reality.

It is a well-known fact that Flying Polyps are virtually impossible to perceive through light-stimulated sensory organs. However, it is also a fact that most observers who have crossed these creatures refer to "lapses of visibility" where some part of the creature is partially seen via peripheral vision. It is believed that the matter that composes a Flying Polyp's tissues does not interact with light in the same way regular matter does. This is partly due to the creature's own neurological activity, which causes the body to persistently rearrange its proteins' quaternary configuration. As a side effect, this causes each individual molecule in the Polyp's body to reflect, refract, bend, or absorb light independently. While this doesn't affect the species directly, it makes them difficult to detect by other creatures with photosensitive organs. Some scholars have studied the effect that Polyps have on animal brains and have proposed that they are "filled in" as visual artifacts in the same manner that our brains fill-in our noses or retinal abnormalities to create clean (albeit incomplete) images. If true, this would mean that Flying Polyps are actually visible (in some way) to our eyes but invisible to our brains.

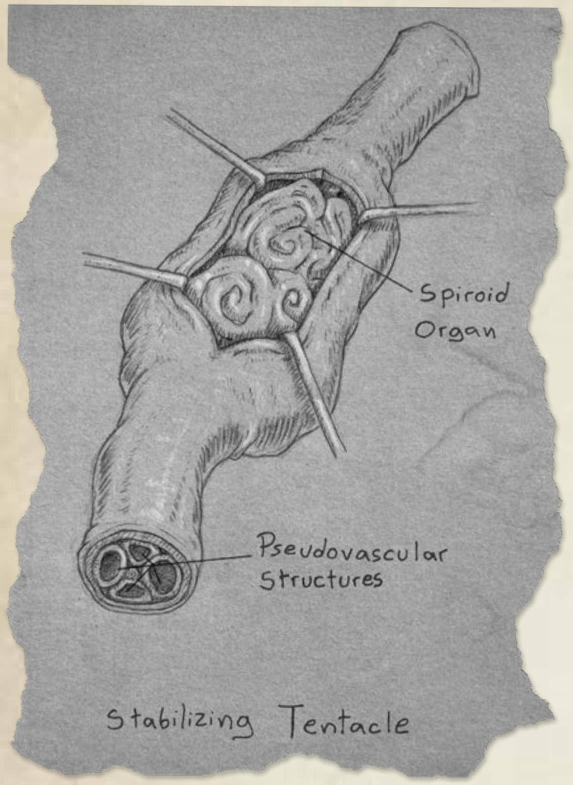
The Polyp's main sensory organs are the eye-like structures on its periphery. While these are not light-stimulated organs, their real purpose remains unknown. It's been suggested that they are capable of sensing ripples that deform the fabric of space-time (i.e., gravitational waves). Once perceived, the creature could chase these ripples in search for prey. It has also been proposed that growing civilizations that consume massive amounts of energy may inadvertently leave an energetic footprint that could attract these creatures.

Naturally, a Polyp will stop feeding on creatures it has stopped sensing. Therefore, once a population's energetic footprint is weak enough (either because there are too few living organisms left or most of the technology has been destroyed) the Polyp will once again become "blind" to its existence. A situation such as this would be particularly bizarre because the effect is that both organisms (Polyp and prey)



would remain blind to each other's presence and could coexist without awareness of the other.

Flying Polyps don't really fly, but hover and move at will as if unaffected by the laws of gravity. They lack air sacks, wings, or propelling funnels found in other known organisms.



Instead, the creatures appear to move due to their ability to generate small gravitational wells around their tentacles' knobs. Each knob generates a small graviton force that moves the body towards its prey. When used en masse, the creature is able to "float" eerily under any atmosphere as if it were underwater. As a rule, longer and thinner tentacles (stabilizers) seem to control fine motricity while their stubbier appendages (motor tentacles) use their digits for gross strength and rapid reactions.

When synchronized, well-placed gravity wells can pull atmospheric gasses toward them in a spiraling motion. This phenomenon can be used by a Flying Polyp to generate wind-like gusts through the atmosphere to attract or mutilate its prey. While extremely resistant to any form of physical damage, Flying Polyps can be dominated through the use of powerful electromagnetic fields. Exposure to such fields has been shown to dramatically alter the quaternary configuration of the subjects' material proteins and blocks at-will reconfiguration. This effect forces visibility to the naked human eye and prevents the subjects from moving.

Even if a Flying Polyp's senses are able to penetrate through time and space, their material bodies cannot. This physiology requires that they obey the normal rules of matter (for this dimension) and care for their physical body to avoid decay. They do this by erecting enormous windowless basalt buildings that protect them from environmental hazards. It would seem that the magnetic composition of basaltic iron assists in the stabilization of the creatures' metabolic activity.

Development:

There is no known information on the development cycle of Flying Polyps. Their cells show no nuclei and their mitotic activity is nonexistent. As far as researchers can tell, a Flying Polyp is never really born.

These creatures are not known to age, but records made by the Great Race of Yith suggest that a Polyp's physical body can decay over time if exposed to the right conditions. Yithians appear to have achieved this by confining the creatures under strong magnetic fields in underground tunnels with no access to food. However, to achieve permanent results, the confinement must remain uninterrupted for at least a couple million years. If the confinement is broken before the creatures are substantially weakened, their backlash is known to be cataclysmic.

Explorer's Note:

So far, the only way to study a Flying Polyp is by vivisecting it while it's paralyzed under a strong magnetic field. This will not kill the creature but will hold it in place and reduce the anatomist's risk of dismemberment.

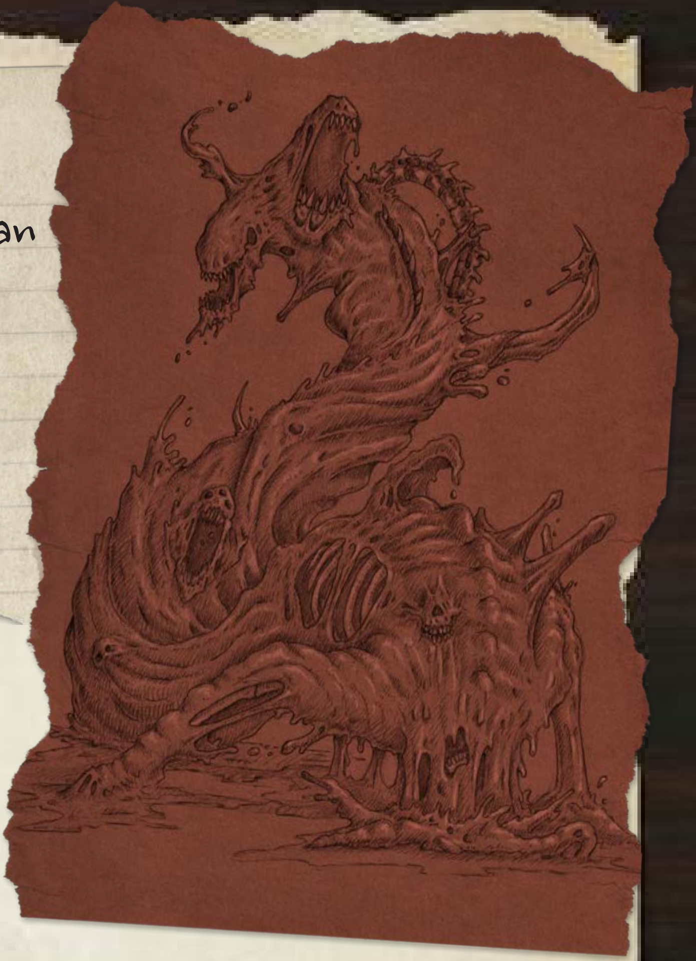
Formless Spawn

Nature: Matter-based amorphous guardian

Weight: ~ 900 kg / 2000 lb.

Height: Variable

Habitat: Underground temples built by the cult of Tsathoggua, mainly beneath the Americas



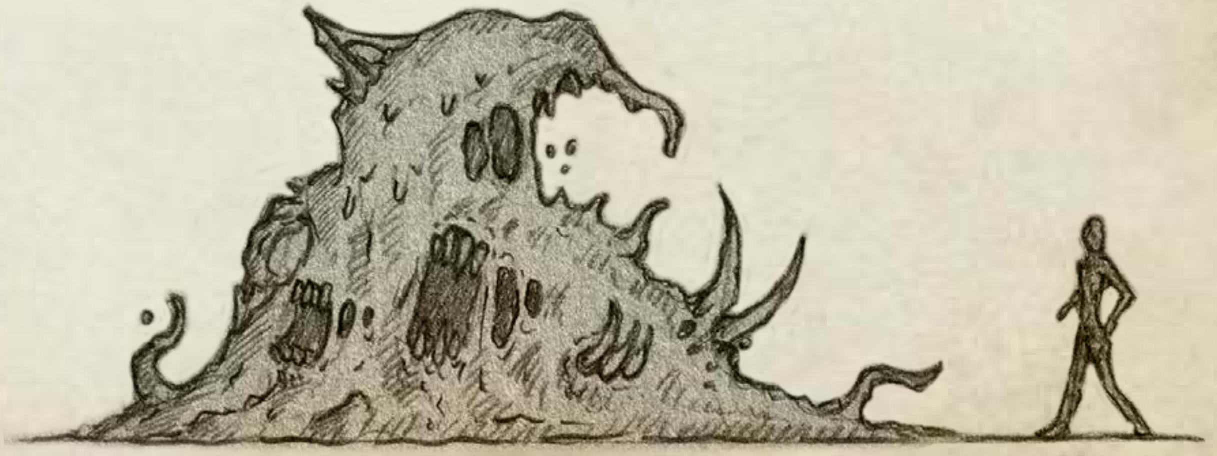
Formless Spawn (plural) are some of the most feared organisms dwelling deep beneath Earth's surface. When found at rest, they resemble pools of pitch-black, bubbling tar resting inside ceremonial tubs or natural depressions. When active, they violently expand and contract their amorphous bodies, creating and reabsorbing limbs, mouths, bones, and even whole faces. They are surprisingly fast and vicious and are known to adapt their attacks to match different types of prey.

They normally dwell near the underground temples dedicated to the transdimensional being Tsathoggua. Although such places are prehistoric, and mostly known through folk legends, at least one of them is believed to lie in N'kai, an ancient citadel near the underground regions of Yoth. Unfortunately, a close encounter with Formless Spawn forced the Ancients of K'n-yan to block all access to this citadel.

Anatomical Features:

Formless Spawn feature an overall amorphous body that resembles a mass of pitch-black tar. They come in all sizes, but usually grow larger than a human, with an average width of 3 to 6 meters. Older individuals are known to grow as large as Shoggoths, but this is not usually the case.

Their anatomical study is particularly hard due to their tissue and organ plasticity. Their main body is made up of what can only be described

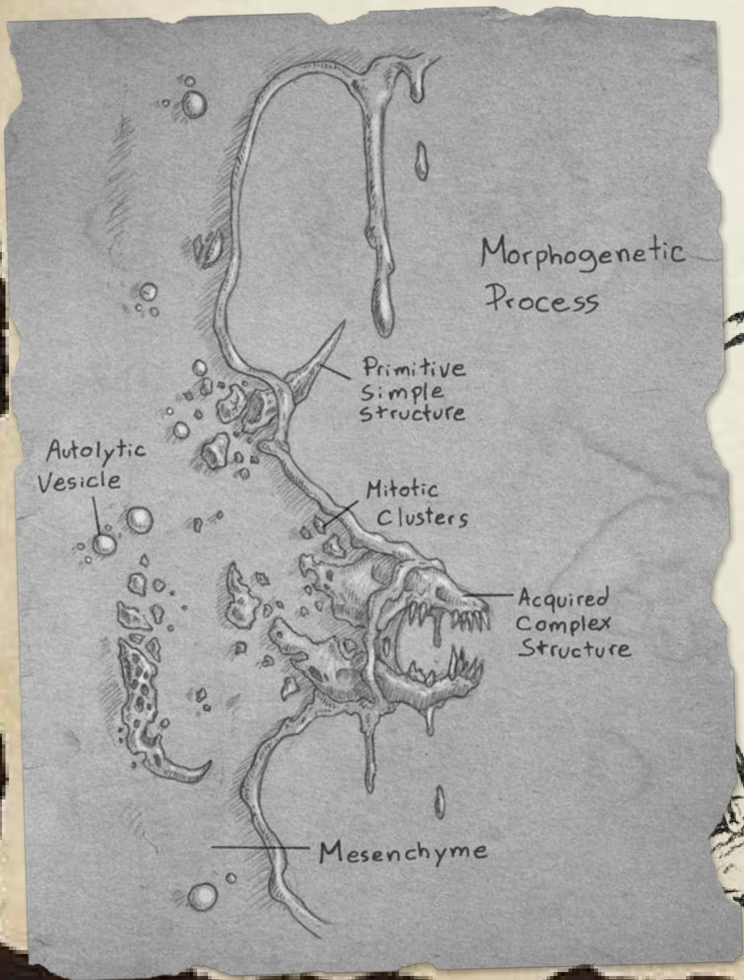


as a mesenchyme by analogy. This semiliquid structure is mainly composed of groups of stem cells in a flexible matrix of an unknown protein, similar to elastin. Bones, tendrils, mouths, and other temporary limbs are similar in structure to their natural counterparts but dissolve quickly when separated from the creature's mesenchyme. Formless Spawn appear to rely on mechanical senses and rarely produce photoreceptive organs.

Dissecting one of these creatures is practically impossible due to their rapid tissue degeneration. Dead Formless Spawn appear to "melt" away as their protein matrix collapses.

Biology & Ecology:

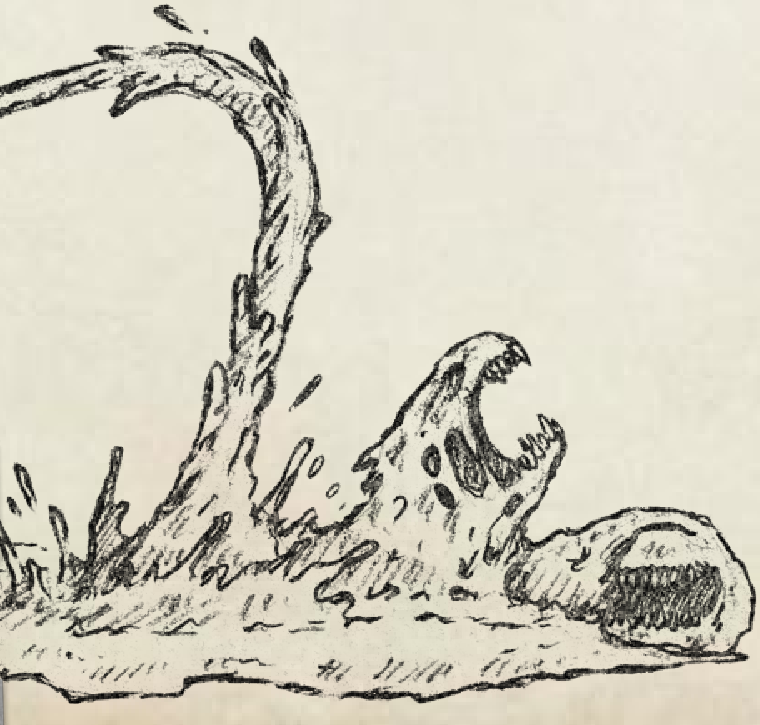
Formless Spawn are, at their core, multicellular eukaryotes composed mostly of undifferentiated stem cells with high mitotic activity. Newly formed cells quickly differentiate and form specialized tissues that begin apoptosis shortly thereafter.



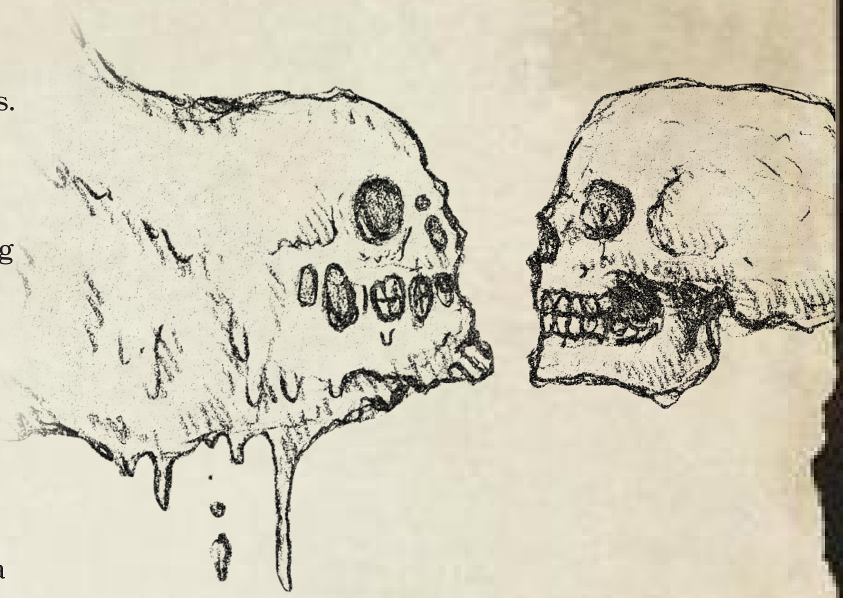
Unlike Shoggoths, the Formless Spawns' protein matrix has relatively small concentrations of collagen, which makes them much more fluid and flexible, but less dense. This allows the creature to "liquify" in order to fit in small spaces (such as crevices in walls) and move rapidly by simple adhesion and cohesion.

When needed, structural support is provided by the rapid differentiation of cells into osteoblasts and chondroblasts, which quickly form bones, teeth, and cartilage out of material stored in their matrix. It's believed that some of these structures are based on the genetic blueprint of previously consumed prey, giving rise to complex forms such as skulls. As soon as the structures are no longer needed, they degrade into vesicles that are reabsorbed by the core stem cells. Since this process consumes large amounts of energy, resting Formless Spawn will usually lie in a state of total undifferentiation.

Their characteristic pitch-black color seems to be a result of neuromelanin deposits in their mesenchymal matrix. This implies that a high dopaminergic-like activity guides the creature's behavior. While some observations suggest the subjects may be intelligent by human standards, further studies are required.



Formless Spawn can be found in groups, but they rarely seem to cooperate as such. They tend to be vicious creatures, and have been known to mercilessly attack their prey even if it means hurting their own kind in the process. They are extremely territorial to dissimilar beings, and attack anything that approaches them or their resting sites. If awakened by explorers, they can stalk their prey by traveling in semi-liquid form through crevices and tunnels, on cavern walls.

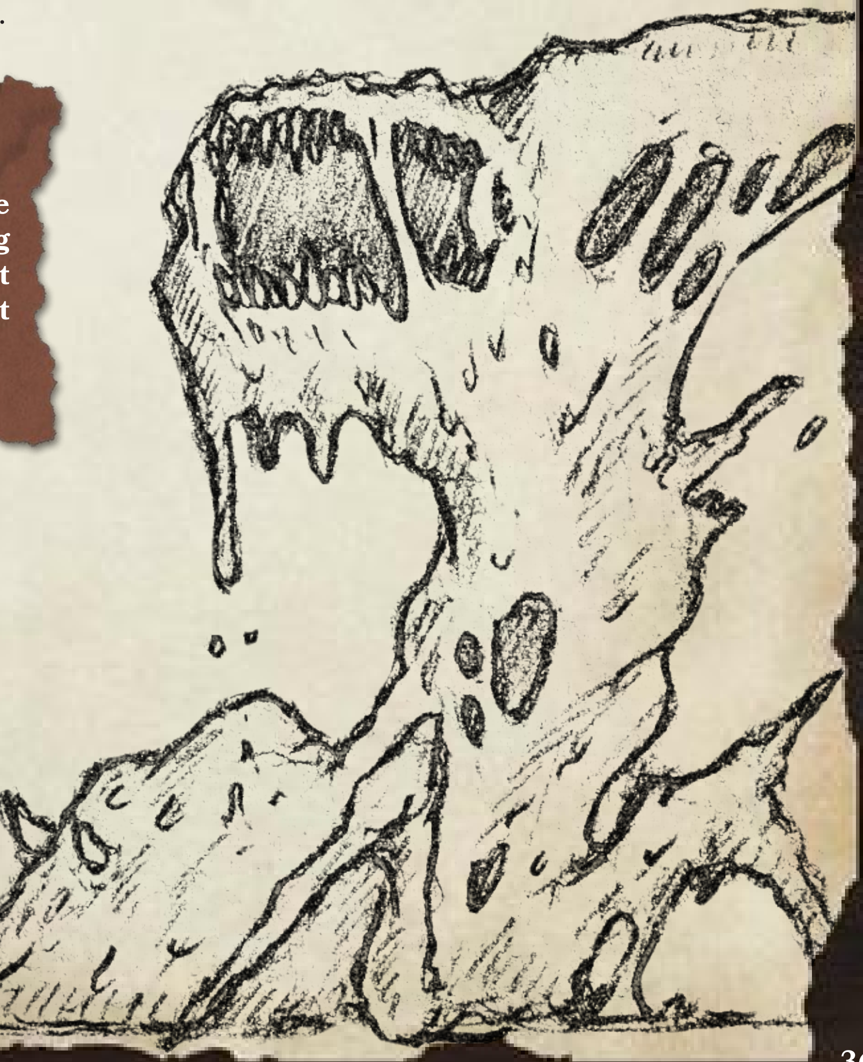


Development:

Formless Spawn have no need to breed to reproduce. Their origin is unknown, but is believed to be tied to the arrival of Tsathoggua to the Earth's deepest underground regions. If left on their own, the creatures can spontaneously divide through a process similar to binary fissure. The process seems to be random but, as with human twins, could be favored by certain environmental conditions.

Explorer's Note:

Most of the data gathered on these creatures was obtained on living organisms. Needless to say, most researchers suffered early, violent deaths while conducting their studies.



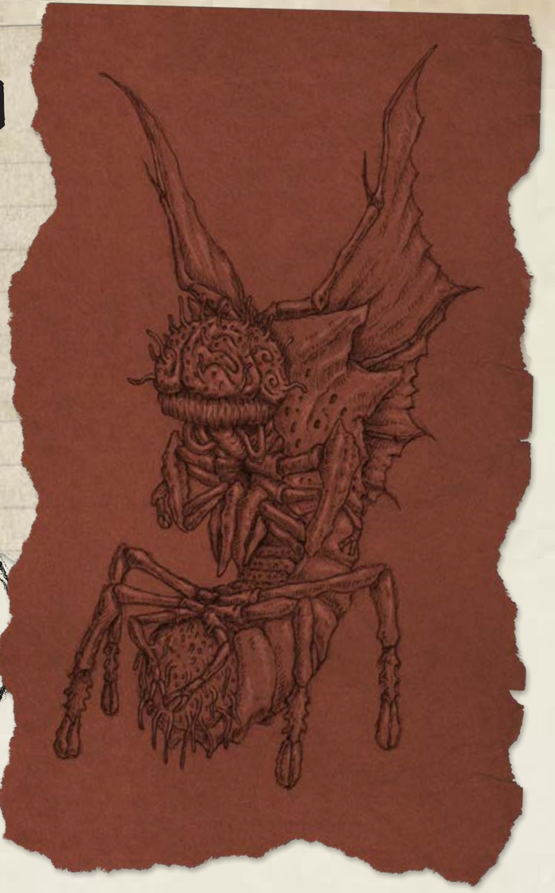
Fungi from Yuggoth (Mi-Go)

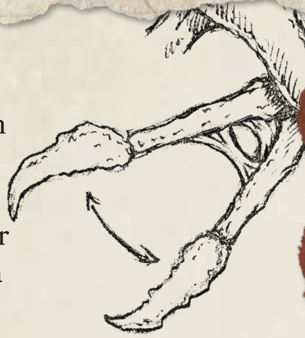
Nature: Multidimensional fungal colonizers

Weight: ~ 50 – 200 kg / 110 – 440 lb.

Height: ~ 1.5 – 2.5 m / 5 – 8 ft.

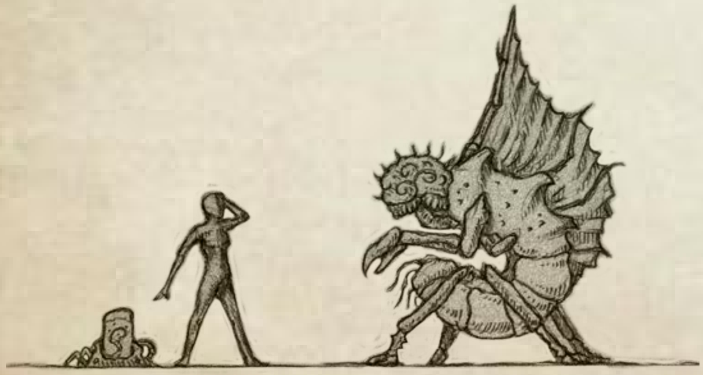
Habitat: Intergalactic colonies – On Earth, they are found near young mountain ranges





Fungi from Yuggoth are a prolific, but mysterious, plague on mineral-rich planets such as Earth. While they have a crustacean-like appearance, they are more closely related to fungi than to any other known form of life. Their drones resemble upright eurypterids (a.k.a., sea scorpions) with numerous pincers and a pair of peculiar wings. They have a strange brain-like head with multiple sensory organs used to traverse their mines and to communicate with others of their species.

Although, incorrectly, assumed to be from Yuggoth, these fungal creatures are space colonizers who arrived in our solar system through a relay base built on Pluto (referred to as Yuggoth in ancient texts). They first colonized our planet before the appearance of mammals in the fossil record and fought the native Elder Things to claim the mountain ranges they craved. The moniker Mi-Go comes from ancient Himalayan populations that saw these creatures roaming on the highest mountain peaks and nicknamed them “wild men”, or Mi-Go.



While they are normally said to leave humans alone, they do extract and collect human brains, transporting them back to Yuggoth in specialized containers.

Anatomical Features:

Anatomical study of the Fungi from Yuggoth is particularly challenging because of their multidimensional nature. While their material cells do resemble Terrestrial fungi, they are also partially made up of a different type of matter-like substance that is extremely unstable inside our dimension.

Their general body shape resembles that of a crustacean or arachnid, with a pinkish shell, large dorsal fins or wings, numerous appendages tipped with pincers, and a large ellipsoid “head” covered with sensory tentacles.

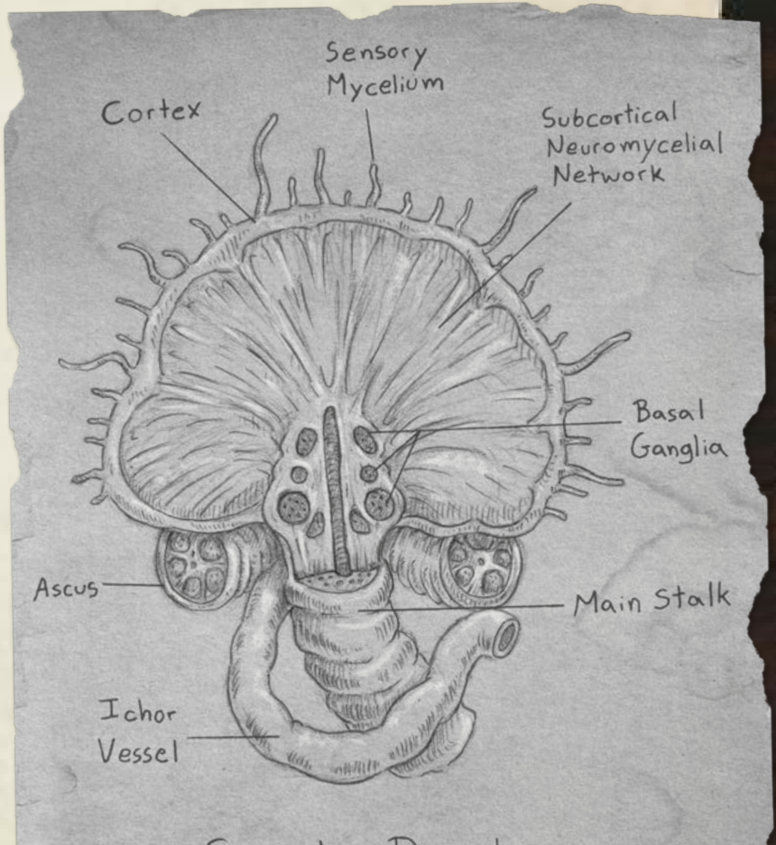
On first sight, the creature’s cephalic portion loosely resembles a primate brain, but a closer inspection reveals some important differences. For instance, the organ’s “neocortex” is not divided into hemispheres, as in bilaterians, and instead grows radially from a central stalk or brainstem. Cortical folds or gyri do not obey any known patterns but form spiraloid shapes that often cross a mid-line. These spiral circumvolutions are topped with hundreds of specialized mycelial threads that grow outwards and connect to the main cortex. The thin, tentacular protrusions are bioluminescent and are theorized to be used for communication. Below the cortex, a frilled organ surrounds the main brainstem and, while similar in appearance to a human's cerebellum, is actually composed of spore-filled gills. Dissecting the cephalic organ exposes the creature's basal ganglia, which form rings that surround the brainstem.

Unlike the head, the rest of the creature's body is covered with pinkish chitin plates that give it a characteristic crustacean look. Fungi from Yuggoth usually stand in a C-shaped posture, where their dorsal plates cover the softer ventral tissue. All appendages, except for the wings, grow from the creature's ventral region, which is also covered with long digestive mycelial threads.

The caudal body portion has two to four walking limbs tipped with small claws. Their numerous sets of arms vary in shape and length, but all end in pincers or pincer-like tips. While flight seems to be achieved by their wings, their biomechanics are not yet understood. All limbs are composed of thick mycelial stems covered in chitinous plates that work like an exoskeleton. The body's caudal portion ends in a stump called a volva. While it appears to be of extreme importance during the creature's development, the adult's volva is vestigial and is mainly composed of digestive mycelia that no longer serve a function in somatic growth.

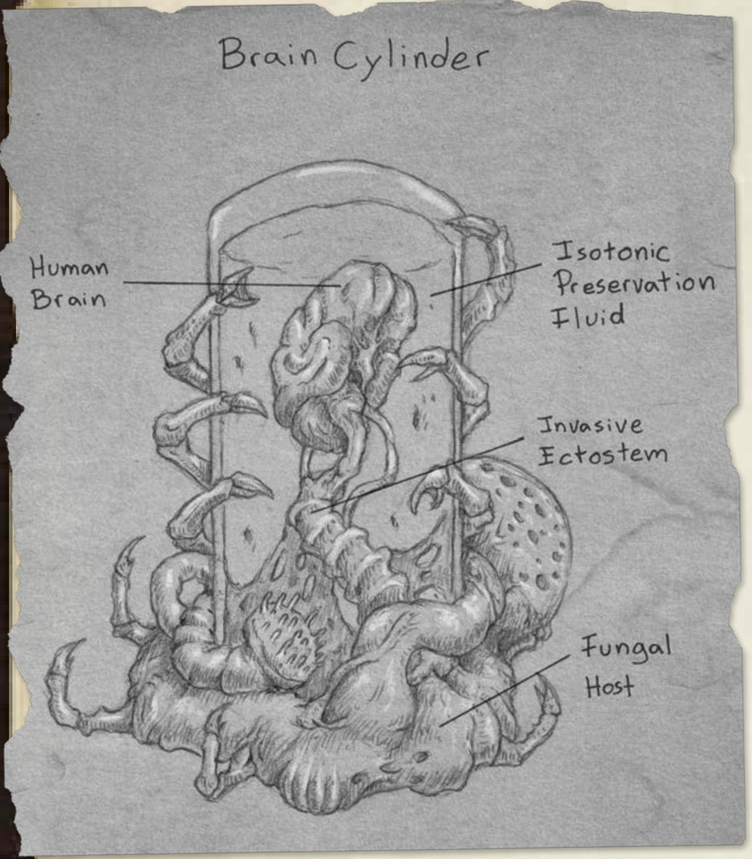
Biology & Ecology:

While Fungi from Yuggoth loosely resemble crustaceans, their histologic structure is more akin to fungal cells than to those of animals. This has led to their classification as a fruiting variety of fungi, albeit of a multidimensional nature. Even though they belong to different kingdoms of life, both Fungi from Yuggoth and animals evolved cognition through completely different pathways (through convergent evolution). Because of this, their psyche seems to be fundamentally different from our own. Behavior, memory, intelligence, volition (will), emotion, and language are all animal traits which we (as animals) expect to find in other "superior" creatures. However, our species often forgets all these are the result of one particular evolutionary path and the interaction of our common neurological and physiological processes. It is possible that these very traits, which define cognition in animals, are not even present in brains evolved in a different parallel of life.



Cephalic Dissection

Though referred to as originating from Yuggoth, these creatures did not evolve there. The Mi-Go hail from deep space, from a cosmic region unknown to humans and often referred to as "beyond time". They are natural colonizers who explore star systems in search of rare minerals which they harvest from young mountain ranges (see below). To do this, Mi-Go travel in massive swarms that use their extradimensional component to bend non-Euclidean space. As soon as they reach a suitable star system, they settle on one of its outer (hence, darker) worlds and build large bases that serve as relay stations. From there, drones set out to find resources and bring them back to this base of operation.



While their largest known colony in our solar system is in the dwarf planet Yuggoth, the Fungi were not the first sentient organisms to inhabit it. In fact, the planet's name itself seems to have been inherited from ancient inscriptions that were found in ruins belonging to the planet's former occupants. The name Yuggoth is seldom known to humans, due to the fact that they rarely interact with space-faring races. Instead, since the dwarf planet was discovered, it has been given the (very appropriate) name of Pluto.

While some of their physical composition is matter-based, Fungi from Yuggoth appear to have evolved a natural ability to interact with dark matter. How and why this is done is unknown, but it has been suggested that their whole physiology depends on their ability to retain this interaction. The multidimensional structure in their molecules (a.k.a., a quinary or five-dimensional configuration) is theorized to be the cause of strange phenomena such as their unpredictable reaction to optical devices and a rapid disintegration if the creature is killed or wounded. Some have proposed that this interdimensional interaction must also be responsible for the creature's ability to fly.

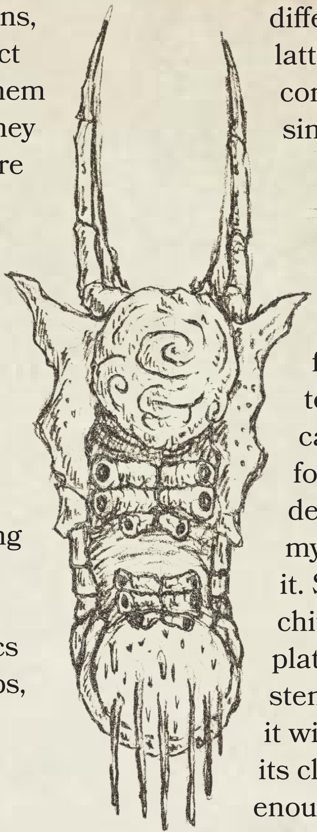
Mi-Go have no notion of family, self, wellbeing, or empathy. They also don't seem to feel or understand physical pain. If one of their limbs is wounded, they will simply cut it out to avoid encumbrance and replace it later if need arises. This behavior seems to have evolved into an almost instinctive predilection for surgery and artificial modifications of their own bodies as well as those of other species.

Fungi come in all sizes and shapes, which are generally dependent on the individual's caste and surgical adaptations. From soldiers and drones to hive-minds and breeders, most of these castes can be found in large colonies like the one on Yuggoth. However, mining operations like the one on Earth rarely require more than drones that take care of two main activities:

- **Mining:** Fungi travel through space looking for planets with geothermal activity and an active metal core. Over time, tectonic collisions in these planets force rare metals out of the mantle into the crust, where they remain trapped inside young mountain ranges. Once sites are identified, the creatures establish mining camps and dig subterranean tunnels that allow them to explore the mountain's core. For this reason, on Earth, they have been spotted in the Rocky Mountains, the Andes, and the Himalayas. Some records even suggest that ancient mining operations in North America reached as deep as K'n-yan and N'kai.

- **Brain collection:** For unknown reasons, Fungi from Yuggoth persistently collect brains of different species and keep them alive in specialized brain canisters. They do not collect non-neural tissue and are uninterested in preserving the bodies (even if they claim they do). It has been suggested that the Fungi are fascinated by alien brains and have a strong scientific curiosity that motivates them to study the captives' reactions to different environments. It has also been theorized that they experiment on different surgical modifications with these brains, testing out sensorial and motor adaptations before applying them to their own bodies. Finally, more mystic academics have suggested that brain activity helps, in some unknown way, to fuel their technology and interaction with other dimensions.

  Collected brains are preserved in partially organic containers filled with a nutrient-rich isotonic liquid. While the liquid's properties are mostly unknown, the organic components of the container (which correspond to a low-ranking Mi-Go caste) release spores that maintain its homeostatic properties. When required, brain containers can be plugged into specialized contraptions that transmit visual and auditory information directly to the brain's occipital and temporal lobes via an invasive ectostem. An output device is required to translate electrical activity in the arcuate fasciculus into speech.



Fungi are mainly visual creatures, though their photosensitive organs are yet to be fully described. Their brain's mycelia are very sensitive and emit colored bioluminescent light when stimulated; suggesting that they communicate by visualizing another's brain activity. Their other main form of communication is sound, which they frequently use when inside an atmosphere. Since they have no mouths, they click their pincers and vibrate their chitinous body to generate different sorts of sounds. Through the latter, they emit a sort of buzzing vocal communication that can be uncannily similar to human speech.

Development:

Fungi develop in a similar way to Earth's mushrooms. Their spores must first find a nutrient-rich environment to settle and form a mycelial disk, also called a primordium. This disk will then form an egg-like button that holds the developing brain. As the brain grows, mycelial threads will form a veil around it. Superficial threads will develop higher chitin concentrations and form structural plates, while inner threads will form the stem and soft tissue. As the creature grows, it will develop limbs and (depending on its class) wings. When its limbs are strong enough, it will sprout out of the ground and begin its assigned labors. What remains of the early veil will mature and form the volva.

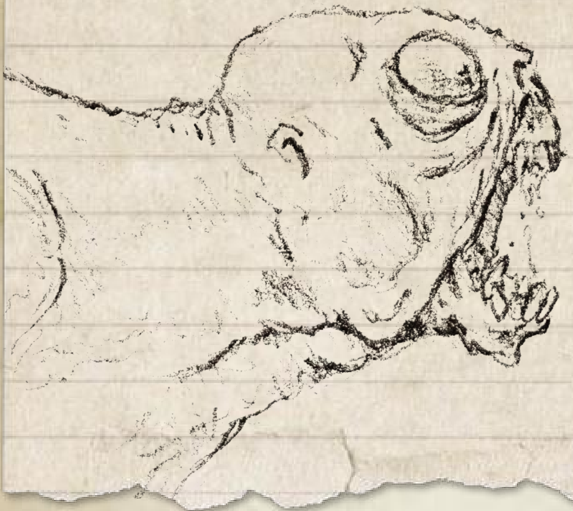
Even if fungal spores can be found almost anywhere near a colony or mining operation, the primordium will not start forming unless it has the right atmospheric and environmental conditions. Since the species does not feed on organic material, it appears that adults must somehow prepare the earth to allow their young to develop.

Development cycles of other castes of Fungi from Yuggoth are mostly unknown, as their interaction with humans is very limited.

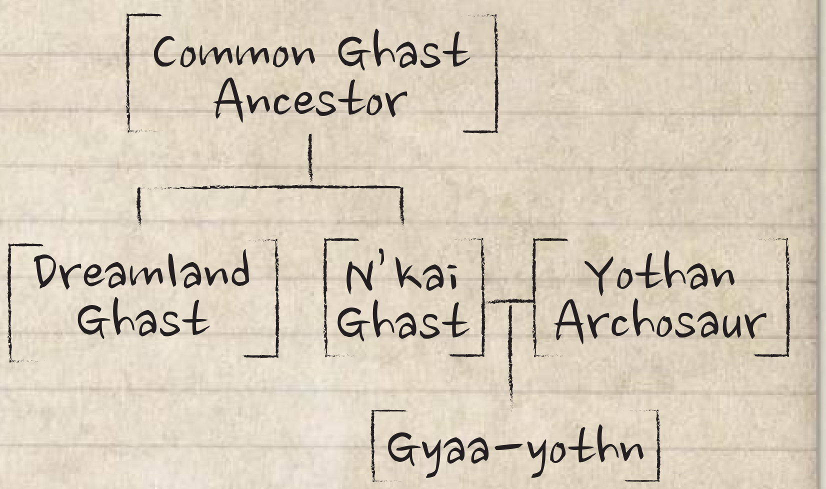
Explorer's Note:

Dissection of a Mi-Go's body must be made immediately after the creature has died. Dark environments and isotonic fluids similar to cerebrospinal fluid seem to help preserve the corpse for a couple of hours before it disintegrates.

Ghast

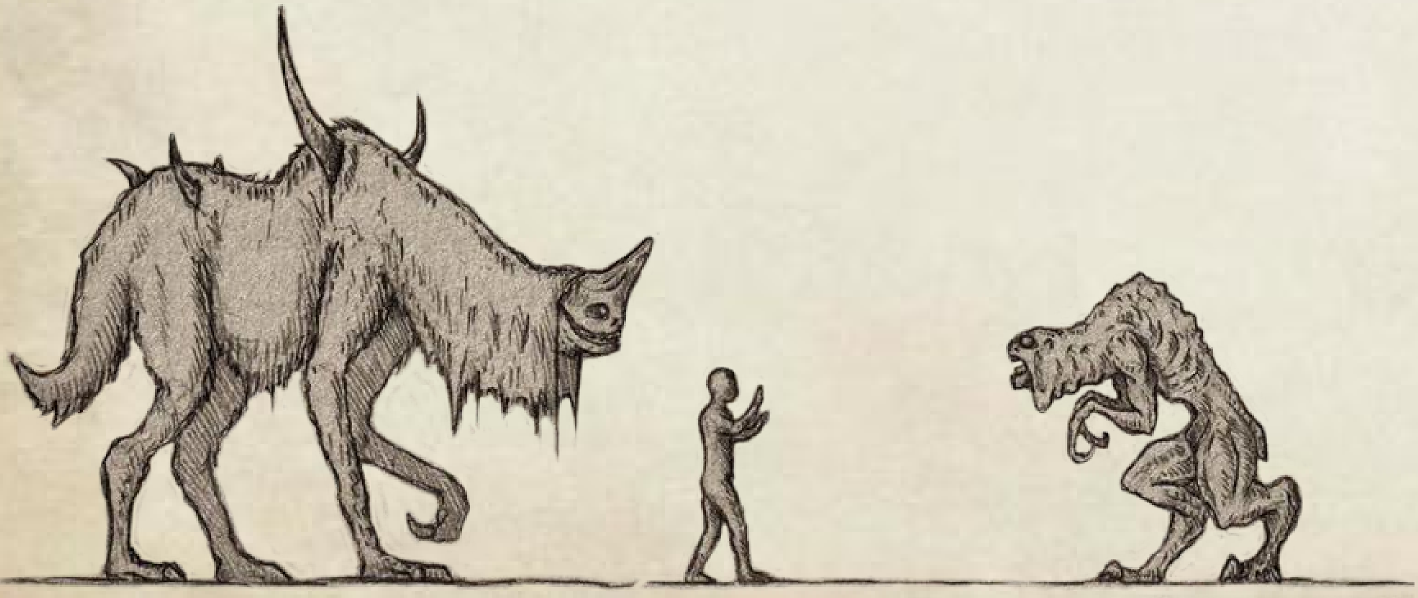


Evolution Chart



Equally feral and repulsive, Ghasts are known to dwell within the deep unexplored abyss commonly known as Zin. Although vaguely humanoid in appearance, they feature multiple adaptations that help them live in their harsh underground environment. Common traits among these creatures include bulbous eyes, cranial malformations (i.e., forehead and nasal atrophy), sharp talons, and muscular hindlimbs. While most individuals share these traits, random physical mutations make each creature unique.

There are two fabled gateways that lead to the vaults of Zin; one in the Dreamlands dimension and one in the waking world. The Dreamlands' entrance is located beneath the underground kingdom of the Gugs, while the waking world entrance lies in N'kai, in the world of Yoth, under the subterranean realm of K'n-yan. While both regions are known to have hosted different Ghast species at some point in history, only the Dreamlands strain has been thoroughly studied. As a matter of fact, most experts currently theorize that N'kai Ghasts are extinct. Today, the Gyaa-yothn, though hybrids, are the only known extant species derived from the waking-world Ghasts.



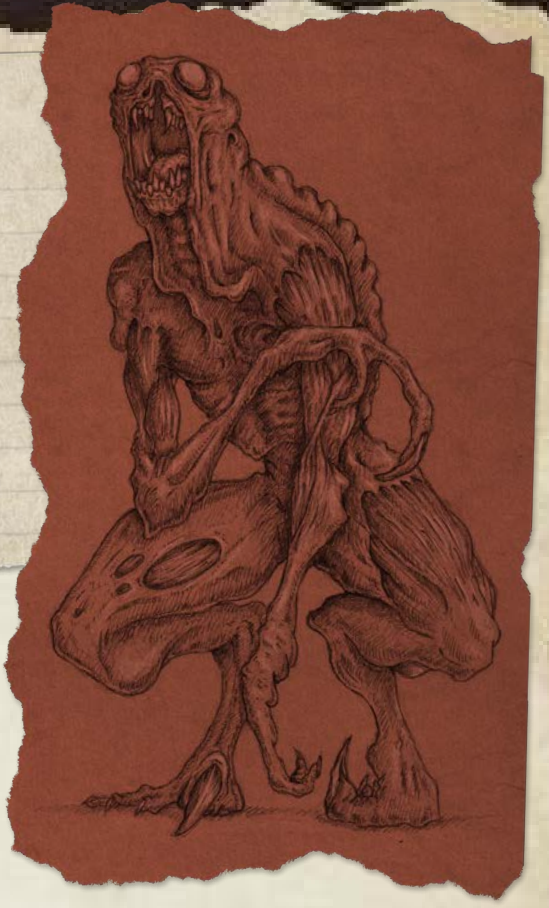
Dreamland Ghast

Nature: Matter-based dream aberration

Weight: ~ 260 kg / 570 lb.

Height: ~ 2.5 m / 8 ft.

Habitat: Dreamland Underground - Vaults of Zin



The Dreamland Ghast is the most representative member of its genera, mainly because it has been described the most. It is considered the only Ghast species still alive today, at least in human-dwelling dimensions. They are vicious creatures that hunt whatever they may find near the underworld caverns that lead to Zin and, while fairly successful at this, their malformations hinder their development outside of their dark homeland.

Anatomical Features:

Dreamland Ghasts have a (mostly) humanoid morphotype with some characteristic distinctions. Their facial features include large, bulbous eyes, anencephaly, and atrophy of the nasal bones. Additionally, most individuals suffer from other skull malformations around the palatine and maxillary areas.

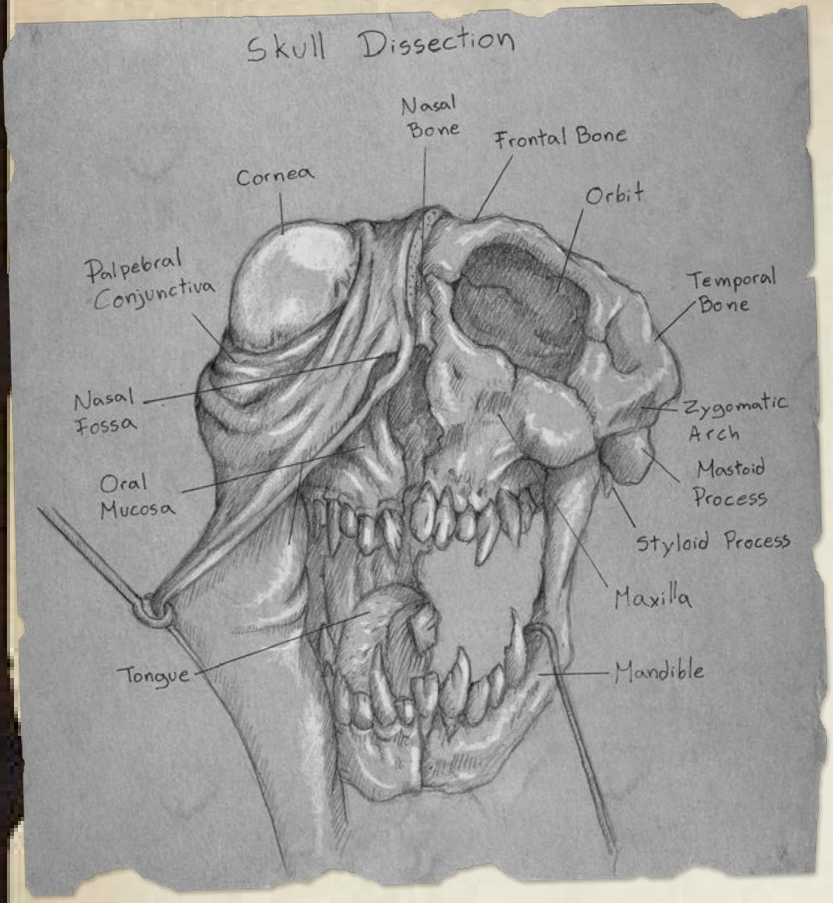
Their forelimbs usually feature two small digits and a single, longer central finger tipped with a hooked claw. Their hindlimbs have notably more muscular development and are designed to help the creature climb, hop, and hunt.

A Ghast's integumentary system is not well developed, resulting in malformations of the skin and nervous system. While skin distribution is redundant around the facial and thoracic areas, it is practically nonexistent around the limb areas. As a result, the creature's limbs are mostly protected by nothing more than muscular fasciae, which make them very sensitive to changing environmental conditions.

Internal dissection of a common Dreamlands Ghast shows an overall mammalian organ distribution with some particular differences. For instance, most dissected specimens presented some degree of lung and liver atrophy, cardiomegaly, and thyroid and adrenal hyperplasia. Their central nervous system is archaic and mainly limited to the mid- and hind-brain regions. Many subjects featured neural tube disorders such as spina bifida and encephalocele.

Biology & Ecology:

Dreamlands' Ghasts are known to wander outside their own dimension when hunting or fleeing from a predator. While there may be many dimensional gateways that allow for this travel, there is only one known junction that bridges Zin with the Dreamlands (the only known place currently holding Ghasts outside of the vault). This gate is located in the dimension's underground, directly beneath the kingdom of the Gugs.



The lightless environments of Zin have resulted in Ghasts evolving no natural mechanisms to protect them from luminous radiation. Because of this, even the slightest exposure to direct sunlight will cause the creatures to suffer third-degree burns in seconds. However, dimly lit environments like the larger tunnels in the Dreamlands' upper underground are not as harmful but may cause irreversible damage after some hours. Their eyes and exposed muscular tissues are particularly sensitive to these types of environments.

Ghasts have well-developed senses of smell and hearing, which they use for hunting and basic communication. Their bulging eyes feature large pupils and ultrasensitive rods that allow them to see in dark or dimly-lit environments, but their lack of cones suggests their vision is colorless and blurry. Interestingly, explorers tell of a "yellow glow" in Ghast eyes that's probably the result of artificial light sources reflecting on the creatures' retinas.

Ghasts will usually eat anything they can hunt, from Gugs and Ghouls to wandering humans, but they are also renown cannibals. While they tend to hunt in packs, the creatures usually lack a synchronized hunting pattern. This absence leads to vicious displays of violent slashing and biting as they try to feed, even before their prey is dead. When starved, potent pancreatic secretions allow them to turn to omnivory, although this is not common.

Their cognitive ability is nonexistent, due to their lack of brain development, which is inferior to that of all waking-world reptiles. While they have been known to communicate through non-verbal language like grunts and guttural noises, they certainly lack symbolization skills and abstract thought. However, this might not be common for all species of Ghasts, as ruins found near N'kai's access to Zin suggest that waking world strains may have developed some degree of metacognition.

Development:

Ghasts are born in the depths of the abyssal vaults of Zin, a vastly unexplored dark realm known mostly from folk tales of the Dreamlands. There is no evidence of what is inside the vault, but the Ghasts' humanoid nature suggests they might develop in a manner similar to mammals. As of this writing, no expedition into Zin has ever made it beyond the cave's entrance, so no further information is available.

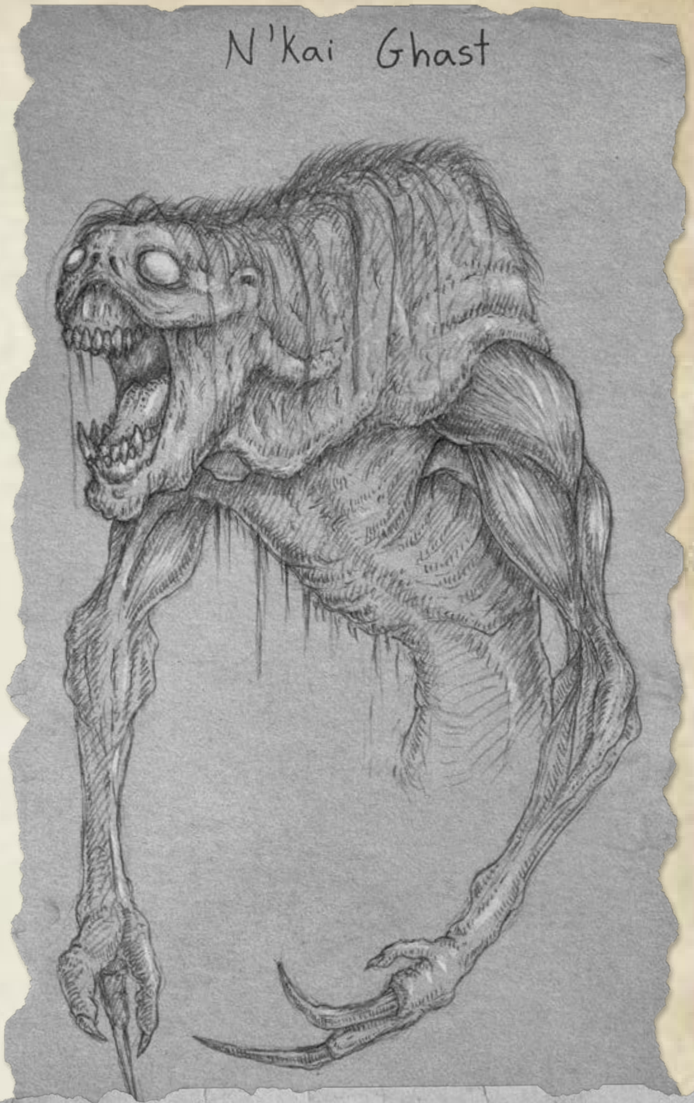
The lack of breeders outside Zin has led to the idea that breeding organisms (if they exist) must feed on whatever lurks inside the vault, never needing to migrate. Local folk tales speak of Zin as a place of malformed dreams where the outer gods' nightmares manifest in material form. A more recent, more academic interpretation suggests that Zin might actually be an intersecting dimension that bridges other dimensional realms. Thus, the caverns beneath the Gug kingdom and the tunnels of N'kai could be perennial interdimensional junctions that connect Zin to the Dreamlands and the physical world that we know. Whichever the case, the mysterious nature of Zin makes the understanding of Ghasts all the more challenging.

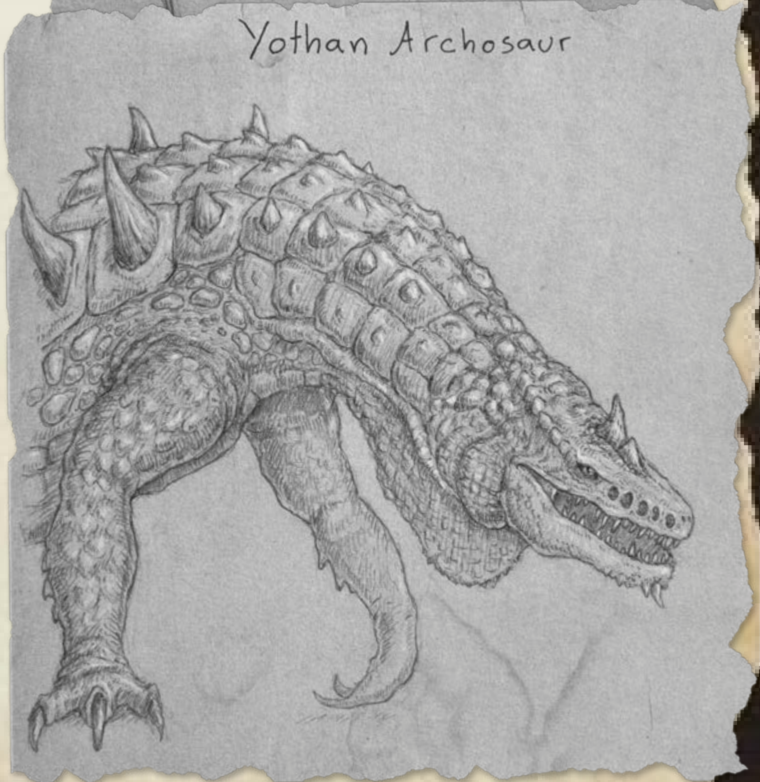
Some studies show that the creatures' extremely fast mitotic activity results in Ghasts reaching maturity just a few months after birth, but also lead to frequent mutations, especially during their first weeks of life. Additionally, mutations of the skin and nervous system suggest an abnormal development of the embryo's ectoderm, which could be the result of a nutrient-poor environment (possibly lacking iron and folate-like nutrients) inside the vaults of Zin. This could possibly explain the neurological difference between Dreamland and N'kai Ghasts.

The high prevalence of cannibalism among Ghasts suggests that this behavior is instinct-driven and developed from a young age. If this is the case, it is natural to assume that even newborn individuals would be forced to flee from larger adults (including their own mothers) to avoid being eaten. While their first meals are probably obtained by scavenging other dead younglings and miscarriages, the hunt for larger, more nutritious prey could drive juveniles out of their natural habitat and into the Dreamlands.

Explorer's Note:

Ghasts are vicious and fearless creatures that persevere in their hunt even when severely wounded. If in need to flee from one, explorers should try to let the animals exhaust each other by leading them to fight their peers.





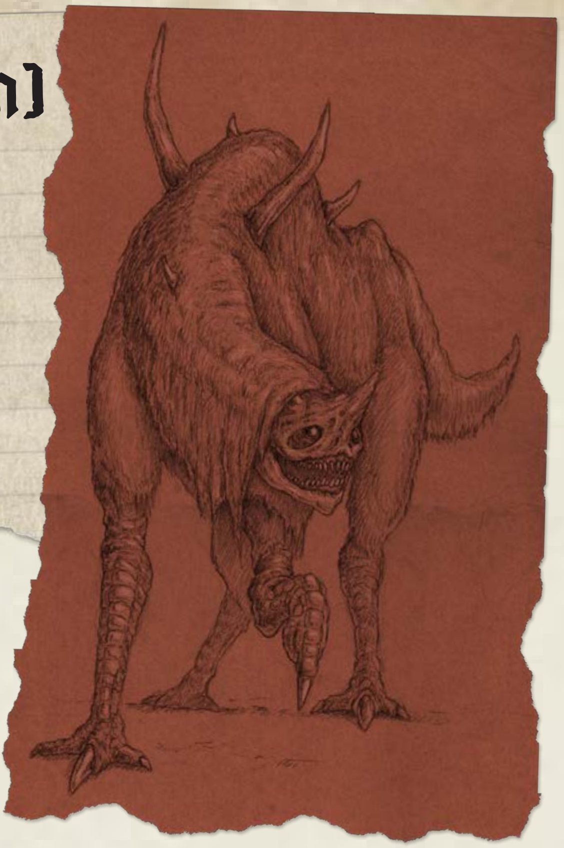
Gyaa-yoth (plural: Gyaa-yothn)

Nature: Matter-based hybrid beast

Weight: ~ 530 kg / 1160 lb.

Height: ~ 3.5 m / 11.5 ft.

Habitat: Central and North America – Underground world of K'n-yan



Gyaa-yothn are the result of crossbreeding experiments developed by the prehistoric populations of Yoth. Stripped of most of their original instincts and appearance, these Ghast hybrids roamed the red-lit Yothan underworld for ages before being found by the Ancients of K'n-yan. With their original creators long extinct, the Gyaa-yothn were domesticated and carried back to blue-lit K'n-yan, where they are currently used as beasts of burden, servants, and food. They are thought to be all that is left of the fabled N'kai Ghasts.

Anatomical Features:

Their general structure resembles a large, tall quadruped with a short tail, elongated limbs, and long neck. They have a human-like face with yellowish eyes and no nasal bridge. While Gyaa-yothn lack facial expressions, their unnatural musculature causes them to bear a persistent sardonic smile. Their frontal bones articulate to form a horn-like protuberance that bulges from their forehead.

Thin, black fur covers most of the creatures' body except for the distal parts of their limbs, while thick, long hair (similar to a horse's mane) grows along their back, covering it from head to tail. Their limbs are relatively thin and tall and feature a general reptilian appearance. Their middle toes are fused together to form one larger middle digit, loosely resembling the hooked limbs of Dreamland Ghasts.

Vestigial features of their reptilian ancestors include osteoderms along their backs and an short tail that is sometimes clipped by their owners. Their size, slow metabolism, and internal features are also compatible with known descriptions of Yothans.

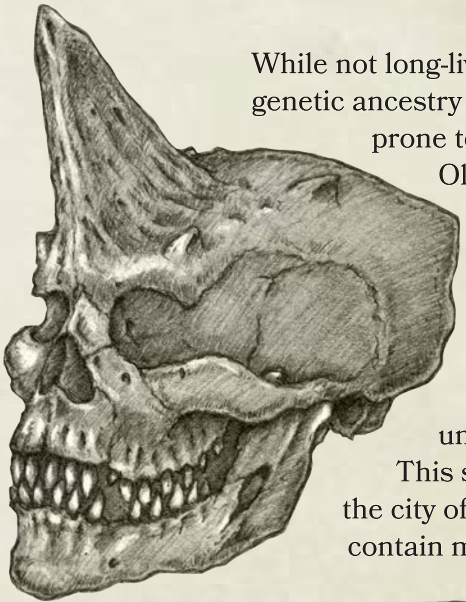
Dissection of a Gyaa-yoth reveals an overall mammalian organ distribution with some reptilian characteristics. One notable difference between the Gyaa-yoth's inner anatomy and the Dreamland Ghasts' organs appears to be centered around the endocrine system, which is less developed in the former. In contrast, hybrids show a notably larger nervous system, comparable to that of modern mammals, albeit with frontal lobe atrophy and some malformations of their basal ganglia. One final difference is their reproductive system, which is adapted for ovipary instead of live birth.

Biology & Ecology:

Gyaa-yothn are the result of artificial selection and forced interbreeding via a forgotten technology developed by the underground civilizations of Yoth. It is strongly believed that the prehistoric populations of Yoth frequently developed new hybrid species to be used as slaves and entertainment. In the case of the Gyaa-yothn, it is most likely they used two underground (now extinct) dwellers of the red-lit caverns: N'kai Ghasts and Yothan archosaurs.

The extinct N'kai Ghasts are believed to resemble their extant Dreamland counterparts except for a few differences. Their cognitive level was probably superior, as they are thought to have been able to use simple tools and build refuges. Also, they are thought to have had less ectodermal malformations and even fur-covered bodies.

Yothan archosaurs are a species of extinct quadruped reptiles that lived in the regions of Yoth even before the Ancients' arrival to K'n-yan. Information on these reptiles is very scarce and is known only from a couple of carvings in N'kai and some bone samples gathered by expeditions to the red-lit abyss.



Today's Gyaa-yothn are relatively passive and submissive creatures. Treated as cattle, they serve as beasts of burden and have been stripped of most of their natural instincts. Unlike Ghasts, they are completely omnivorous and can live off mushrooms and underground vegetable life for long periods of time. Despite this, domestic Gyaa-yothn are usually fed meat from slaves and underground fauna to ensure their growth. Their genetic mix allows them to survive in the red-lit world of Yoth and in the blue-lit world of K'n-yan. Still, their Ghast ancestry makes them unable to survive under direct sunlight.

Artificial selection has made their cellular structure relatively unstable, which results in Gyaa-yothn being sickly and prone to neurologic, skeletal, and malign ailments.

Development:

Even if they look like mammals, Gyaa-yothn organs resemble those of archosaurs, so they reproduce by laying hard-shelled eggs in underground mounds near decomposing fungi. Since most of the creatures initially brought from Yoth came from the same herd, present-day Gyaa-yothn show a high prevalence of genetic mutations resulting from inbreeding. Wild-type Gyaa-yothn's life expectancy and morbidity rate is currently unknown.

Most individuals are domestic, being bred and kept like cattle in underground valleys near the cities of the Ancients. However, some Gyaa-yothn have formed wild herds that roam around the blue-lit mushroom forests of the American continent's underground. It is unknown if any of these herds still dwell in Yoth, as most ventures into that red underworld are banned.

While not long-lived, the Yothan archosaur genetic ancestry of Gyaa-yothn makes them prone to almost unlimited growth. Older individuals can grow as tall as giraffes if overfed and well cared for, but this is not common. There are descriptions of a "lesser" hybrid breed that is mainly used for forced labor and is unsuitable to work as a mount. This strain cannot be found outside the city of Tsath, but it is thought to contain more Ghast than Yothan DNA.

Explorer's Note:

Even if they lack formal cognition, Gyaa-yothn are instinctively submissive and will quickly alert their masters when they find something unexpected.

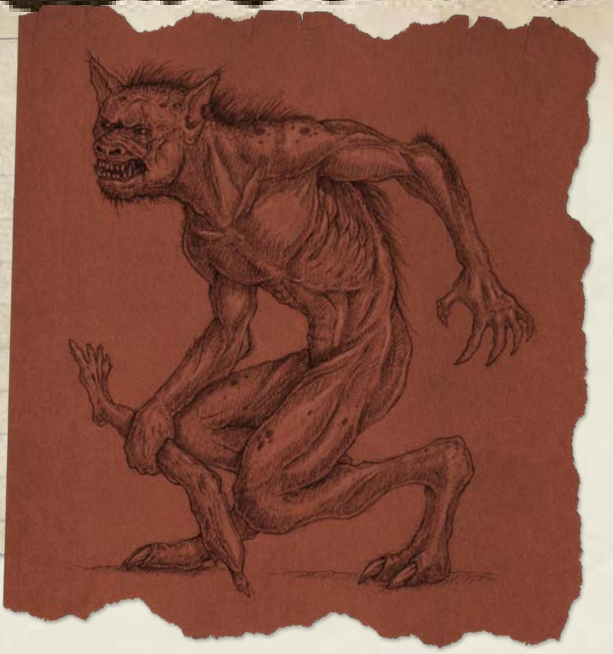
Ghoul

Nature: Matter-based carrion feeder

Weight: ~ 90 kg / 200 lb.

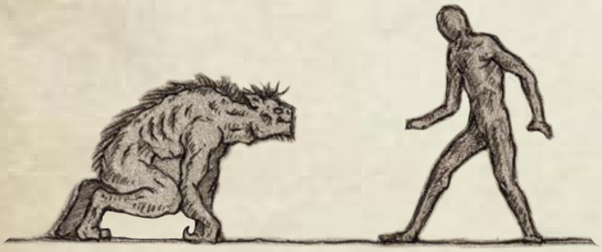
Height: ~ 1.7 m / 5.5 ft.

Habitat: Earth and Dreamland cemeteries and underground tunnels



While they may look monstrous to us, Ghouls are actually closely related to humans. They resemble hunching primates and move comfortably either as quadrupeds or bipeds. Their face is their most distinguishing feature, as it bears an uncomfortable mix of human and canine traits. They live in underground environments, preferably close to cemeteries, hospices, and battlefields from where they draw corpses to feed on.

They are territorial but rarely go out of their way to hurt a living human. Despite this, most folk legends speak of them as monsters and even suggest they are undead. While these legends are absurd, Ghouls are known to attack living humanoids if provoked or starved. In any case, any direct interaction with them is best avoided, especially when near human children.



Anatomical Features:

Most Ghoul subspecies feature distinctive details and markings, but they all follow the same general body plan. They are clearly humanoid, semi-bipedal creatures but show some canine-like features that differentiate them from all known hominins.

A Ghoul's face is usually the center of popular fascination, as it is human enough to be empathetic, but animal enough to be uncanny. They have a short, stubby snout with large, overdeveloped canine teeth and a strong mandible. They also feature large eyes, pointy ears, and prominent supraciliary arches.

Their body is usually hunched and rests in a crouching position. Muscular development of the upper body is superior to that of most humans, probably as a result of their scavenging habits. Despite this, a Ghoul's appearance often gives an impression of malnourishment. This is exacerbated by their lack of fatty deposits, which helps exaggerate their musculoskeletal features. While most of the creature's pasty-grey skin is hairless, some patches of light fur tend to grow along its backside and limbs.

Different clans may feature some interesting characteristics such as osteoderms, different color patterns, more or less fur, and even some adaptations of their limbs. For instance, the Ghouls of Thok all feature two overdeveloped claws and two atrophied vestigial toes on each foot. This adaptation seems to enhance the creatures' climbing abilities in the steep regions surrounding Thok, giving rise to the belief that they are hooved or "goat-legged".

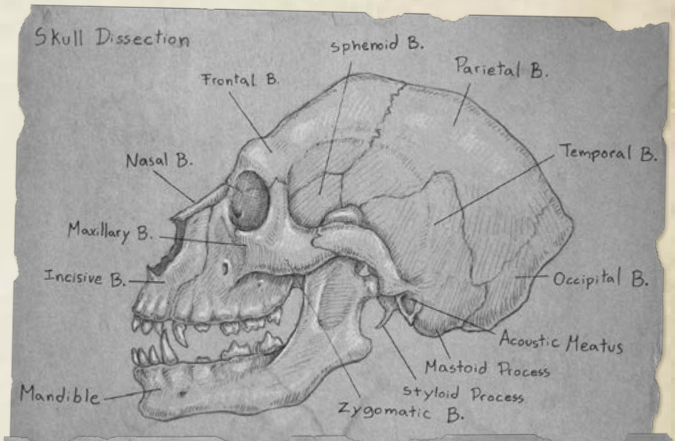
Dissecting a dead Ghoul proves their evolutionary relationship with hominins, as their inner organ morphology is virtually the same as primates. In contrast, their musculoskeletal system does feature some fundamental differences worth describing. A Ghoul's cranial bones are mostly the same as those of a human, but their distribution is quite distinct. Unlike modern hominins, Ghouls feature an incisive bone that articulates to their protruding maxillary bones to form the creature's "snout". Its nasal bones are mostly horizontal, and the zygomatic arches are much more prominent than those of a human. The creature's frontal bones are less prominent than those of hominins and its parietal, temporal, and occipital bones are similar to those of canids. A Ghoul's whole mouth is clearly adapted to its scavenging lifestyle, as it also features strong molars with well-developed masseter, zygomatic, and temporal muscles.

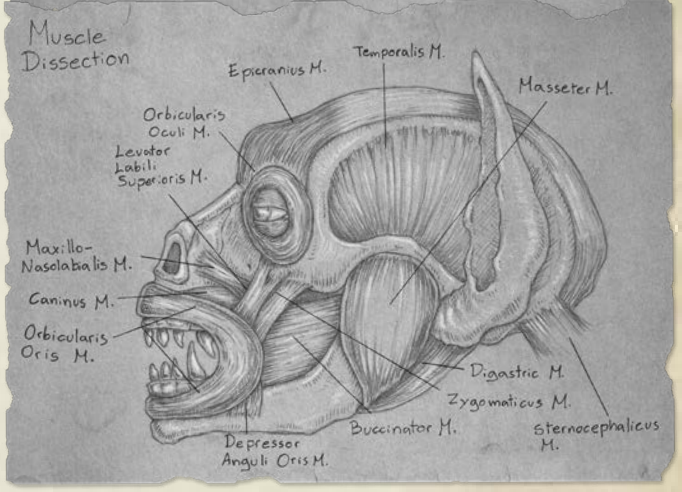
Biology & Ecology:

Ghouls are intelligent creatures, possessing cognitive skills just slightly below an average human. They live in underground tunnels in both the Dreamlands and the waking world, where they form clans of up to a hundred individuals. They have developed their own form of culture and vicarious education, but their specific customs vary from clan to clan.

Their origins are not well understood and, paradoxically, genetic studies have not helped remove this puzzle. Technically, a Ghoul's genome is near-identical to that of a modern human with the exception of certain different epigenetic markings. Because of this, some cryptoanthropologists have proposed their classification as a subspecies of *Homo sapiens sapiens*, namely *H. sapiens necrophagus*. Opponents of this theory rely on the phenotypic differences between Ghouls and humans as an argument against their agglutination as a single species. In any case, most (if not all) cryptoanthropologists agree that humans and Ghouls are more closely related than previously thought.

Whatever their origins, Ghouls are adapted for underground life and have no physiological need of sunlight. Their pale skin can endure sunlight for prolonged periods of time but will suffer sunburn more easily than humans. Most clans live in underground caves interconnected by tunnels that help them move from region to region. Their underground dens often have dedicated tunnels that lead specifically to their feeding grounds on the surface. These include cemeteries, hospices, battlefields, and the like.


Skull Dissection
Sphenoid B.
Frontal B.
Parietal B.
Nasal B.
Temporal B.
Maxillary B.
Incisive B.
Occipital B.
Acoustic Meatus
Mastoid Process
Styloid Process
Mandible
Zygomatic B.


Muscle Dissection
Temporalis M.
Epicranius M.
Masseter M.
Orbicularis Oculi M.
Levator Labili Superioris M.
Maxillo-Nasolabialis M.
Caninus M.
Orbicularis Oris M.
Digastric M.
Zygomaticus M.
Buccinator M.
Sternocephalicus M.
Depressor Anguli Oris M.

Ghouls are generally scavengers and feed on humanoid corpses, munching on bones and marrow with their powerful molars. However, unlike Wamps, their immune system is not built to resist most anaerobic bacteria, so they prefer feeding on either very recent or very old carcasses. When hungry or upset, Ghouls are known to attack living humans, but this is not usually the case, as their slow metabolism forces them to consume as little energy as possible.

Because of their habits and epigenetic markings, Ghouls suffer from a congenital inability to process excess iron in their diet. This metabolic deficiency has been suggested as the main reason for them not being full carnivores. It has also been suggested that humans with hereditary accumulation of porphyrins could have some close Ghoul ancestor.

While most Ghouls bear their clan or subspecies' features with certain pride, most of their skin variations are the product of bacterial and fungal colonization. As different clans feed off different types of corpses and live in diverse underground environments, their epidermal biome is also diverse.

While they are hardly social creatures outside of their own clans, some Ghouls have been known to bargain and form alliances with other species, if they need to. By using their coarse barking language, they have struck deals with at least some humans and even with the infamous Nightgaunts of the Dreamlands. They are even known to have campaigned against common foes to rescue their own brethren or to help their allies.

Development:

While their appearance may be different, Ghouls reproduce in the same way as humans. They are some of the Dreamlands' few placental mammals and give birth to one to two live younglings per gestation. Unlike humans though, they have very short infancies and may reach adulthood by the age of 13.

Young Ghouls are usually raised in packs by caretakers but are mostly left to thrive on their own. Most of their learning is vicarious and depends on observation of their older kin. Juveniles tend to stick together and help each other but will continuously try to exert dominance over their peers. When fully adult, Ghouls form small packs within the clan, which they treat as their "family" group.

In some cases, Ghoul babies can be "planted" on a human homestead in place of an existing child. While this appears to be an instinct-driven behavior, it seems to happen more frequently with families that seek to be "blighted" by a Ghoul clan (e.g., a family that has moved near an ancient manor that is dangerously near to a clan's feeding tunnel).

When this happens, the Ghoul baby is accidentally brought up as if it were human (they can be hard to tell apart when they're so young) and the human baby is brought underground to be raised as a Ghoul. As it grows older, the excess fat and carbohydrates of human diet will cause the Ghoul youngling to develop fatty deposits that hide some of its "ghoulish" features. This type of diet will eventually lead the creature to develop allergies and metabolic disorders. As it grows into an adult, the creature's looks and behavior will diverge exponentially from its human peers until it is no longer able to live above ground.

Human babies that are kidnapped by Ghoul clans usually die of malnourishment or infectious diseases. Those that survive develop a mix of ghoulish and human traits, particularly regarding their hair and skin. Some may even modify their bodies to better suit their lifestyle. Modifications include sharpening their teeth and nails, marking their skin with ritual piercings and scars, or using orthoses to hide their human traits. After some time, the human's genetic expression is gradually modified until it is virtually identical to other Ghouls. This explains how humans of any age may "become" Ghouls after prolonged exposure to their lifestyle. Because of limitations in our genetic flexibility, this process cannot be reverted.

Explorer's Note:

While it is not usually the case, Ghoul clans can be befriended by dedicated explorers that help them out. They are known to be as loyal to their friends as they are vicious with their enemies.

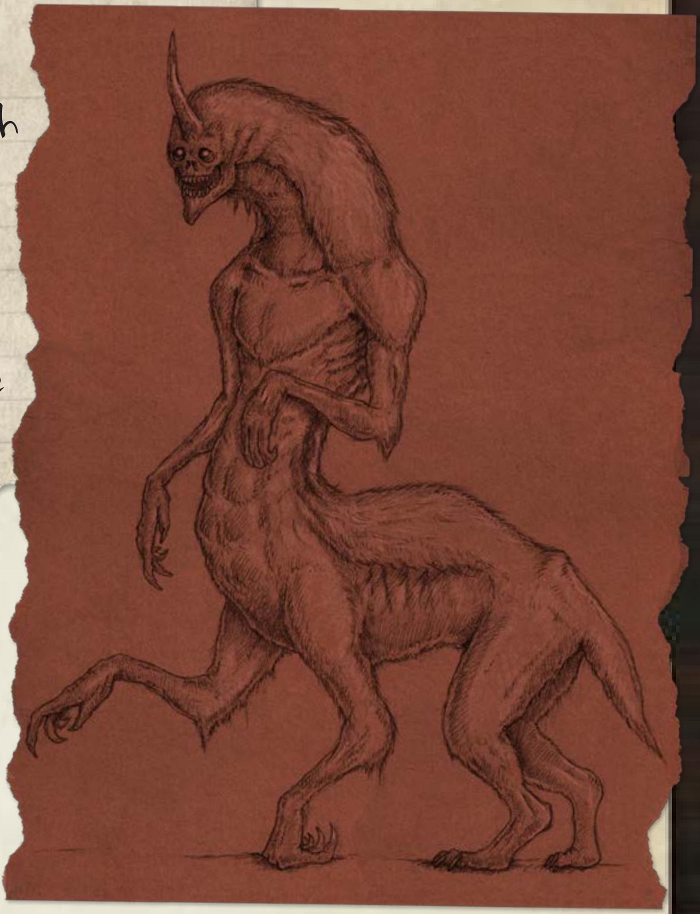
Gnoph-keh

Nature: Matter-based Arctic behemoth

Weight: ~ 1.8 t / 2 s. t.

Height: 3 – 5 m / 10 – 18 ft.

Habitat: Earth's Arctic circle and the Dreamland's Lomar region



Gnoph-kehs are some of the most fearsome creatures in the Arctic circle in both the Dreamlands and our physical world. While they do feature some vague humanoid traits, their massive size, six limbs and fur-covered body easily distinguishes them from all known hominins. Even though their origin remains clouded in mystery, their behavior has been documented as both brutal and cruel.

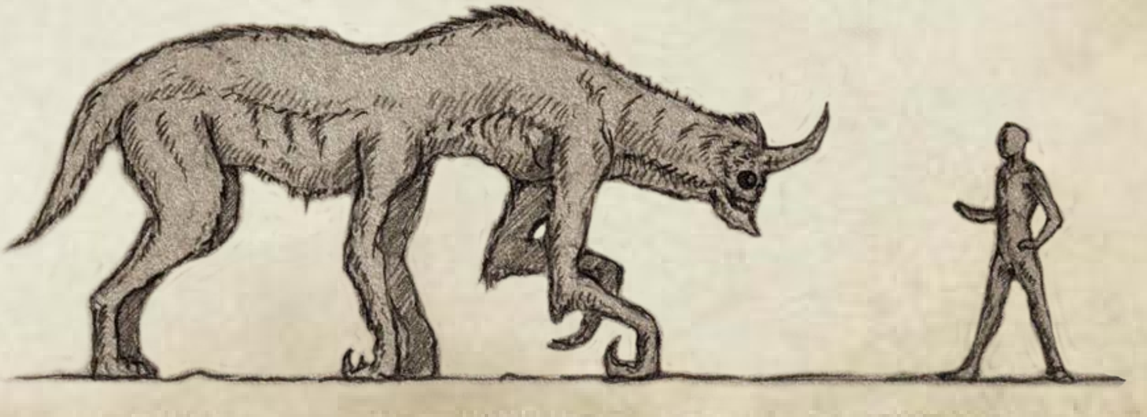
Arctic explorers usually refer to Gnoph-keh not only as predators, but specters, as their ability to move silently and psychologically torture conscious prey is unparalleled. Evidence suggests that an explorer's fear is well-placed since most encounters with these creatures end in madness or straight-up massacres.

Anatomical Features:

Gnoph-kehs have a strange mix of astounding human-like features and a bizarre body plan that's unseen in any other known organism.

Their morphotype is loosely primate-like, albeit with six limbs. They have a long spine with two sets of ribcages that form the creature's two pectoral girdles, each of which connects to their forelimbs and mesolimbs, while their pelvic girdle connects to a pair of strong hindlimbs. With this distribution, the fearsome Gnoph-keh can easily function as a biped, quadruped, or hexapod depending on the situation.

The Gnoph-keh features a human-like face with thin facial musculature that makes them virtually expressionless. Unlike their facial



muscles, the Gnoph-keh's masticatory muscles are very well-developed. Perhaps their most defining facial feature is their facial horn, which is made of a set of bones that protrude from their frontal region. Older creatures may develop more horns as a result of persistent osteogenesis.

Most of the creature's body is covered by a thick coat of white fur. Beneath their fur, the Gnoph-kehs' skin is generally stiff and leathery and has an unsettling black coloration. Explorers have often compared it to necrotic tissue resulting from hypothermia.

Dissection of a Gnoph-keh is a nightmare for any evolutionary biologist, as it represents an anatomical paradox. The creature's musculoskeletal structure clearly shows a primate origin, but its six limbs, double thorax and inner organ distribution are unseen in any known chordate.

To sustain its hexapod structure, the creature's middle ribcage has developed an interesting adaptation. For instance, the upper rectus and oblique muscles' caudal section insert on the inferior manubrium and scapular spines, as opposed to the pubis and iliac crests of primates. The same happens with the upper erector spinae muscles, which insert in modified thoracic spinal crests instead of the sacrum.

Regarding inner organs, the Gnoph-keh's specific structures of the thoracic cavity, such as the mediastinum, heart, and lungs are only found inside the upper (larger) ribcage. The rest of the creature's body is occupied with its massive liver and digestive system. No evidence of sexual organs has been found in any dissection so far.

Biology & Ecology:

The nature of Gnoph-kehs is mostly unknown, and so is their biology. Their study is particularly difficult because of their immense size, aggressive nature, and scarcity. What little academic notes have been found (mostly from the diaries of ill-fated biologists and explorers) are gathered here.

They are known to be ravenous creatures that feed exclusively on animal meat. Cannibalism is a common practice among the Gnoph-kehs, so they are normally seen wandering alone or in small groups. While they apparently crave feeding, the creatures appear able to survive without sustenance for months on end. This ability has been linked to their large livers, which might be able to concentrate glycogen in massive proportions.

Careful study of their skin shows that they lack melanocytes and, thus, their black coloration would appear to be caused by persistent ischemia resulting from dermal vasocontraction. How their tissues are able to survive under Arctic conditions is still a matter of debate.

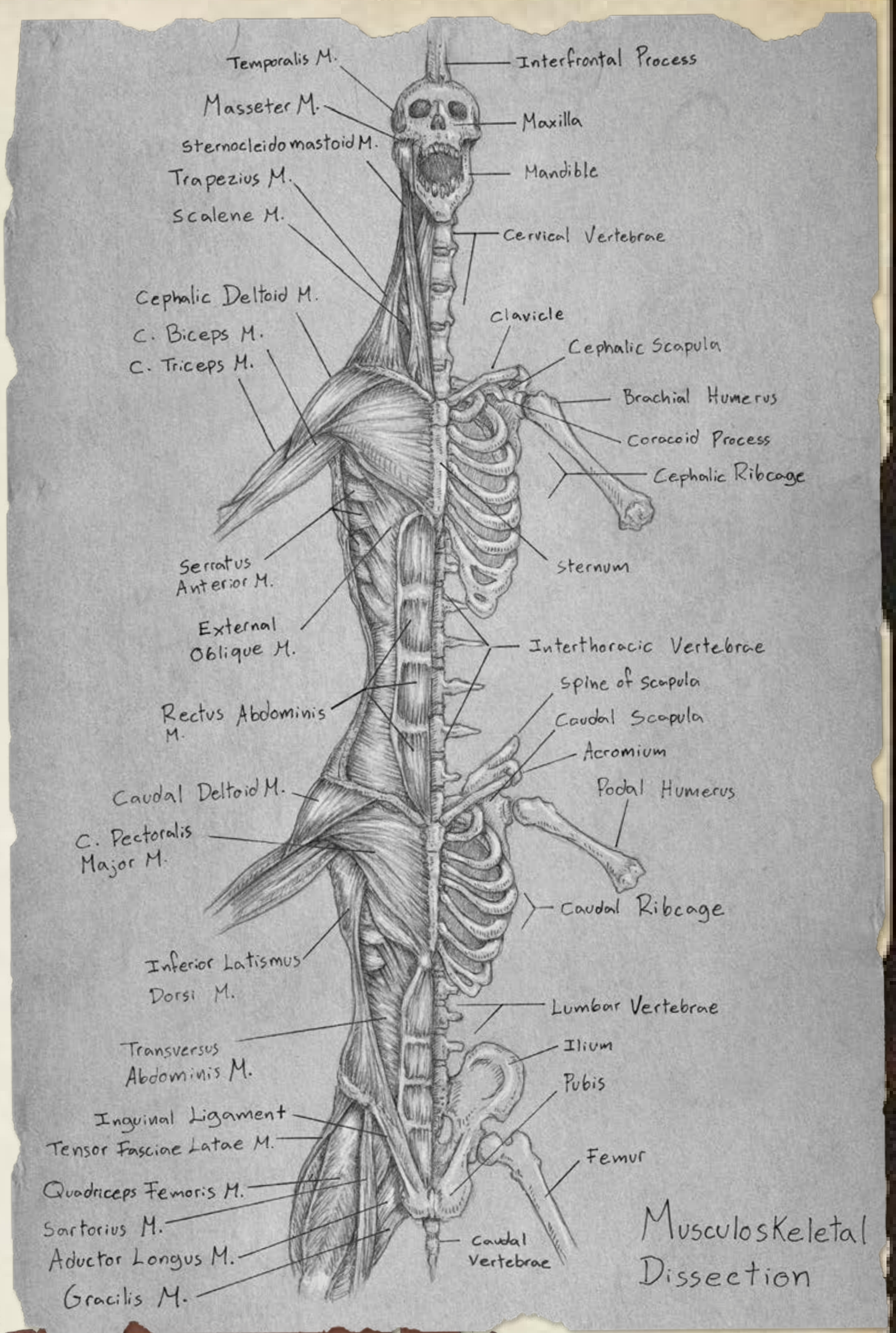
Gnoph-kehs show no evident signs of cognition, and their behavior is different to that of archaic hominids. They lack any form of true language and instead rely on howls and grunts as a means of communication. They are known to cooperate with each other, if need arises, but may try to cannibalize their kin. Folk tales and some witness accounts suggest that these creatures sometimes wander the Arctic winds while whispering word-like sounds to no one in particular. This behavior is believed to be compulsive and instinct-driven but may be a form of communication with an unknown being.

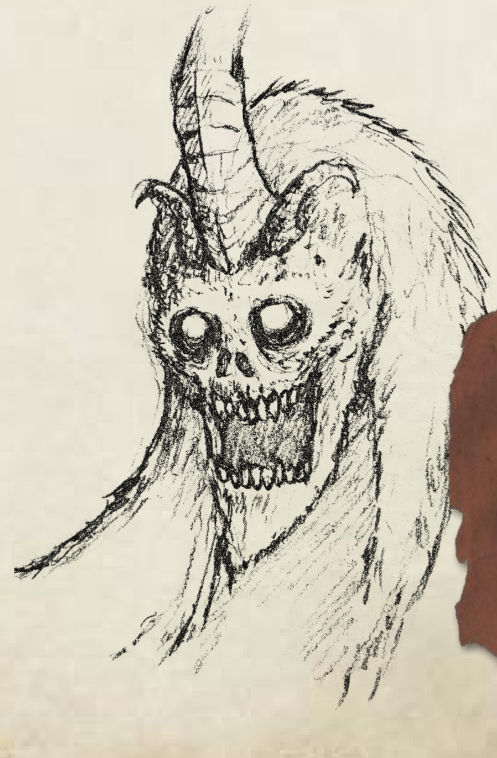
Development:

The Gnoph-keh's development cycle is virtually unknown. They are believed to be three-dimensional, but no evidence of breeding has been described in either the Dreamlands or the waking world. As far as we know, they may be unable to breed on our plane.

Morphologically smaller specimens have been spotted in the Dreamlands' Arctic plains and seem to travel near larger creatures to scavenge on whatever is left after feeding. Whether these are sightings of smaller adults or actual younglings has not yet been proven.

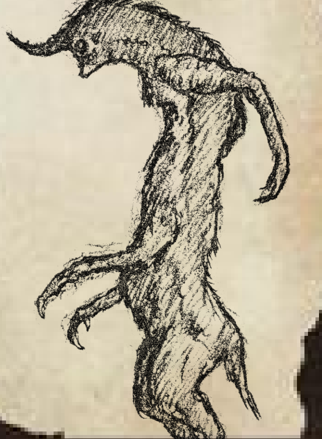
There is heated debate among cryptozoologists regarding the Gnoph-keh's phylogeny. Some have suggested that, because of their similarities with the Gyaa-yothn, their origin could be the result of interbreeding or genetic engineering. A different theory proposes that their present form is the result of massive mutations of a humanoid tribe due to exposure to high levels of cosmic energy. This latter theory is backed by circumstantial evidence of ritual monoliths dedicated to a being known as Ithaqua found on the Arctic Circle and near Lomar. These findings have caused some scholars to suggest that Gnoph-kehs should be studied as a persistent Satyr-type mutant instead of a natural species.


Temporalis M.
Interfrontal Process
Masseter M.
Maxilla
Sternocleidomastoid M.
Trapezius M.
Mandible
Scalene M.
Cervical Vertebrae
Cephalic Deltoid M.
Clavicle
C. Biceps M.
Cephalic Scapula
C. Triceps M.
Brachial Humerus
Coracoid Process
Cephalic Ribcage
Serratus Anterior M.
Sternum
External Oblique M.
Interthoracic Vertebrae
Spine of Scapula
Rectus Abdominis M.
Caudal Scapula
Acromium
Caudal Deltoid M.
Podal Humerus
C. Pectoralis Major M.
Caudal Ribcage
Inferior Latismus Dorsi M.
Lumbar Vertebrae
Transversus Abdominis M.
Ilium
Pubis
Inguinal Ligament
Tensor Fasciae Latae M.
Femur
Quadriceps Femoris M.
Sartorius M.
Caudal Vertebrae
Aductor Longus M.
Gracilis M.
MusculosKeletal Dissection



Explorer's Note:

Survivors of Gnoph-keh attacks develop strange compulsions and sleep disorders that gradually end in psychosis. Notably, observed episodes of the victims' somniloquy show astounding similarities to the creatures' compulsive whispers.



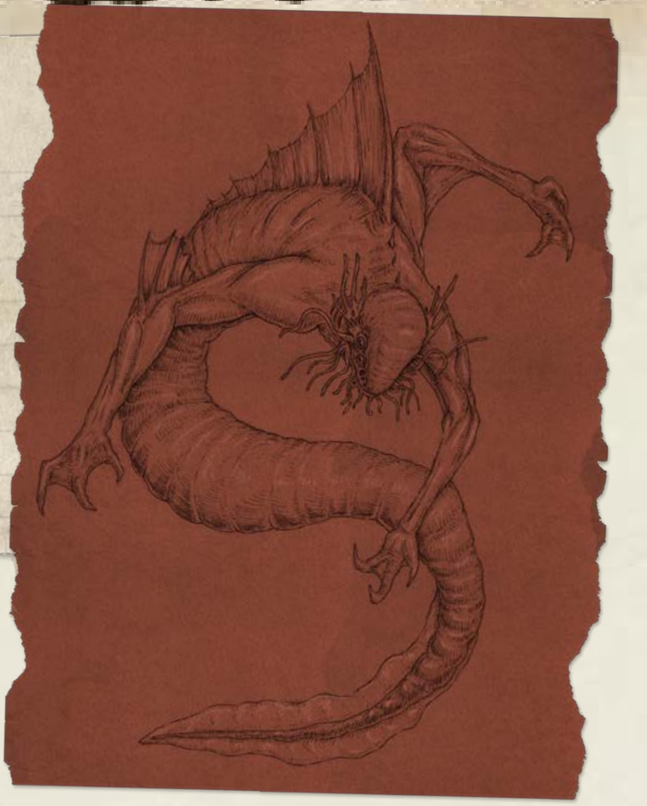
Gnorri

Nature: Matter-based dream amphibians

Weight: ~ 100 – 600 kg / 220 – 1300 lb.

Height: 2 – 3 m / 6.5 – 9.8 ft.

Habitat: Dreamlands' tropical underwater environments

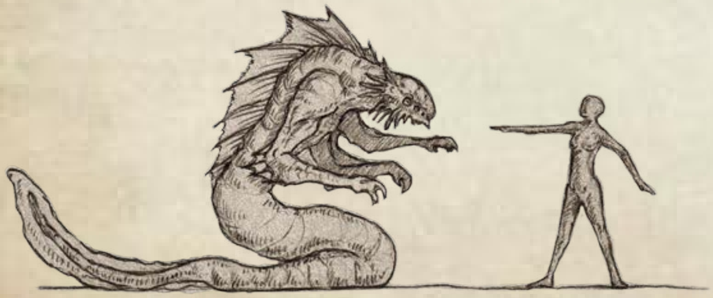


Gnorri are mysterious humanoid beings native to the Dreamlands' oceans and coastal regions. They resemble large hominins with tentacled, featureless faces and a long tentacular lower body. Perhaps their most distinguishing feature is their ability to grow or reabsorb their upper appendages. The beings usually bear two arms on one side and one on the other but can grow up to four simultaneous limbs.

While they do interact with humans on occasion, Gnorri are not keen on surface-dwellers. They are extremely proud and territorial and will attack vessels or explorers that go near their underwater cities without consent. Their strength and versatility make them dangerous foes both on land and sea, something that's clearly reflected on folk mariner tales.

Anatomical Features:

Gnorri can be easily identified because of their unique appearance among ocean-dwelling species. They have an upper humanoid appearance and a lower "tentacle-like" body. They lack lower limbs but may present up to four upper limbs (two on each side).



Unlike the rest of their bodies, their faces are expressionless and bear no human features. Their eyes are aligned on the sides of the face instead of to the front. Their external gills grow like tendrils from the back of their heads and down the jawline. The creatures' mouth is mostly hidden from sight, giving an impression of being mouthless. Two to three pairs of internal gills can be found behind slits on the sides of the neck.

Their torso is very similar in structure to hominins, save for an occasional fin or the additional limbs. Muscular mass on the torso is of an alien plasticity and may be redistributed at will when needed. As a result of this, Gnorri may take the structural support of one limb and grow a supplementary one, resulting in two smaller individual limbs. Most studied adults seem to prefer having three upper limbs for enhanced versatility (one stronger arm on one side and two smaller, dexterous arms on the opposite side). Depending on their particular needs, Gnorri may bear any combination of arms, ranging from zero to four.

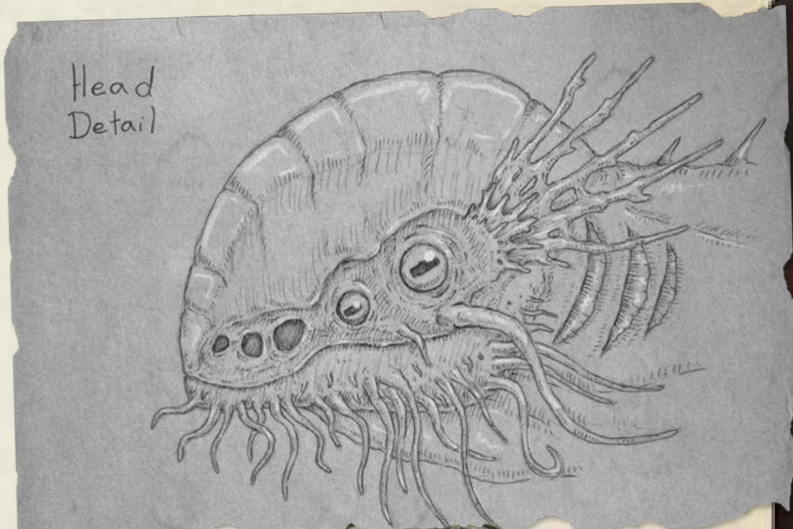
The creatures' skin is covered in scales and may feature fins or sensory tentacles, depending on their needs. The scales are usually thicker on the face, back, and arms, while thinner and more flexible around the ventral abdomen and the sides of the torso. Gnorri are usually very colorful creatures and some varieties are known to change their color patterns at will.

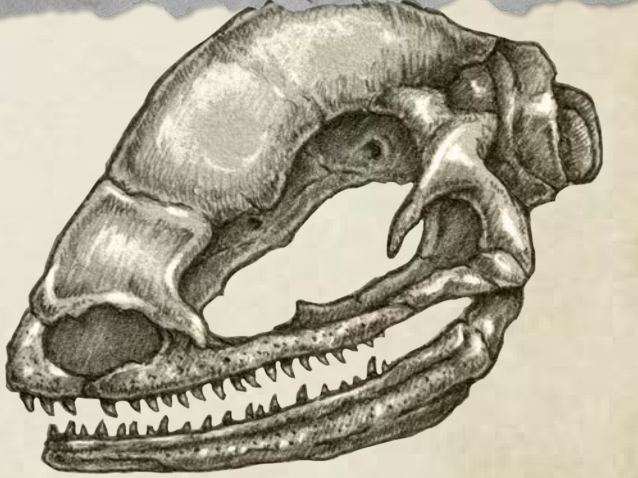
While commonly referred to as a "tentacle", the Gnorri's lower body cannot be biologically classified as such. Its nomenclature is still debated among oneirobiologists but appears to be unclassifiable until the species' phylogeny is better understood (see below). Until a better term can be applied, this elongated structure will be referred to by the general term of "lower extremity".

Dissection of a Gnorri is a fascinating endeavor, as its specific features vary greatly depending on the individual's cause of death and, as a whole, presents many evolutionary paradoxes. Even their classification as vertebrates or invertebrates is hard because of this. All Gnorri feature an axial cartilaginous structure used for support. However, this "skeleton" is limited to the creature's thorax and head. The remainder of the body appears to depend on axial structures made of dense connective tissue.

Their upper limbs are shaped like those of a salamander but are not held together by ligaments or muscle. Instead, they are surrounded by serous membranes (similar in composition to a human's pleura and peritoneum) that contain a viscous electrosensitive tissue that allows contraction and reallocation. When mature, these sacks are almost identical to human muscles both in appearance and distribution. Though boneless, fully formed arms usually contain a solid, chitinous, bladelike structure, similar to the internal shell found in many squids and sepiolids, inside the axial sinew (called a gladius by oneirobiologists). Since the chitin cannot be reabsorbed, the gladius is expelled when the limb is no longer needed.

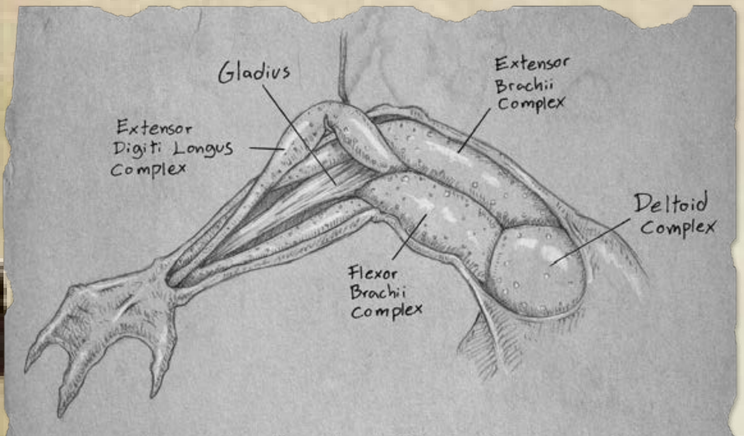
The Gnorri's inner organs are not held together by ligaments. Instead, they float freely inside the creature's single body chamber, which is filled with a nutritious serous fluid. Notably, the creature's spine and peripheric ganglia are far more complex than those of any waking-world animal. Their organs are otherwise similar to those of salamanders and depend on their overdeveloped body wall to achieve structural support.





Biology & Ecology:

While Gnorri greatly prefer oceanic environments, they are actually amphibious. They breathe underwater through their internal and external gills, which passively absorb oxygen. If a Gnorri allows itself to dry, its exposed gills will shrivel and eventually fall off, forcing the creature to use its internal organs for underwater ventilation until it regenerates.



Brachial Dissection

While on land, a Gnorri's previously collapsed lungs are relocated to the torso and held in place by its strong thoracic musculature. The lungs are then filled with air thanks to the negative pressure generated by the thoracic expansion. This process is unconscious and takes seconds to perform. Sick or wounded individuals can have trouble with this transition.

Limb growth is achieved due to fast protein relocation around a newly formed sinew spur. The spur's connective tissue grows in length as it surrounds itself with muscular sacks. Stability is achieved thanks to the dense connective tissue inside the limb's axis and, when mature, the chitin gladius. It must be noted that this process takes a toll on the rest of the creature's body, which resents the lack of available amino acids. Growing a limb also requires immense amounts of energy, which is obtained from glucagon deposits found in their large livers.

Gnorri are intelligent creatures capable of advanced cognition and symbolic language. They live mainly in the Dreamlands but can travel between dimensions in the same way humans do. They are proud beings and are very fervent toward their cultural values, which makes them wary of surface dwellers and other intelligent forms of life.

They live in small villages built inside underwater caves. The builder class is extremely proficient in excavation and growing coral structures through chemical manipulation of the environment. Rich reefs provide the Gnorri with enough nutritious support to maintain their high metabolism.

Their customs, like those of humans, are dependent on their individual background and sociocultural context. For instance, some tribes recycle their gladii and turn them into weapons and jewelry, while others discard them as body waste. Their approach to trading, education, and diplomacy is just as variable.

Religious cults are also common but vary between tribes. One example of religious extremism came from the diary of a dream explorer that described a cult of Gnorri fanatics who believed appendages were perversions brought by surface-dwellers and, because of this, lived their entire lives completely limbless. While this type of extremism is not common, it can lead to animosity between tribes.

Most Gnorri prefer to spend more time underwater than on the surface. While on land, they are able to secrete a crystalline mucous fluid that helps keep their skin hydrated for a limited number of hours before needing to return to the sea. An exception to this behavior comes from a couple of known Gnorri settlements on coastal regions that prefer to live on land with occasional forays into the ocean. These colonies' inhabitants have adapted over time and developed more reptilious scales that prevent dehydration.

One of the most debated aspects about the Gnorri is their phylogeny, which is inadequately understood. Two conflicting schools of thought argue that their evolution derives from either mollusks or chordates. The mollusk theory implies that the species evolved from a Cephalopoda sister clade where Gnorri ancestors lost their outer shell and adapted their foot and mantle to what is now their lower extremity. Their cartilage skeleton would have developed as an acquired trait, while their high cognition would have been the result of convergent evolution with mammals.

The opposing theory focuses on the creatures' solid skull and pectoral girdle and suggests instead that Gnorri developed as chordates, branching off the clade of amphibious Adelospondyli. This would imply that they lost the majority of their skeleton over time and adapted their tail into what is now their lower extremity. Sadly, the creatures' ego makes them reject both theories and state that they have always existed as they are now, making their study even harder.

Explorer's Note:

Tales of bearded merfolk usually point to Gnorri settlements. However, unlike the creatures of sailors' tales, they are more likely to receive intruders with sharpened spears than with luring songs.

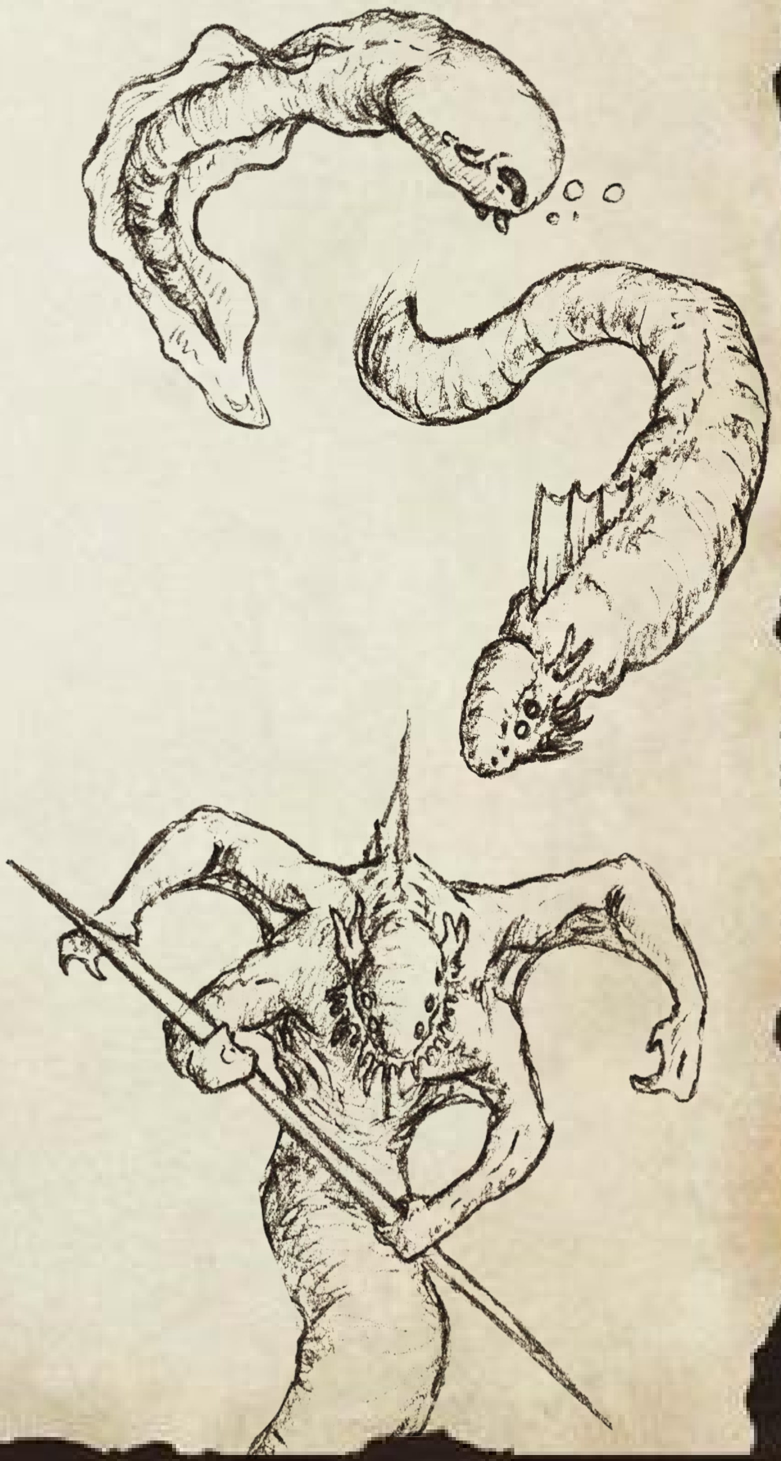
Development:

Gnorri reproduce through external fertilization. Healthy, fertile females will instinctively lay thousands of eggs at a time that drift in the oceanic currents. These eggs are covered in a nutrient-rich secretion that protects them and triggers a hormonal response in males, who fertilize them on the spot. Since this whole process is involuntary and instinct driven, Gnorri spend no time actively worrying about reproduction.

Fertilized eggs will either continue to drift or lay down on the seabed until they hatch tiny plankton-like larvae. Both eggs and larvae are usually preyed upon by other species, including filter feeders, but their sheer number helps maintain a stable population.

Gnorri larvae lack limbs and have microscopic eyes, both of which slowly develop as the creature matures. Their loose resemblance to waking-world caecilians originally inspired oneirobiologists to suggest the amphibious origin theory of the species.

Once mature, Gnorri can consciously control the number of limbs they bear. While they could, theoretically, have no limbs and concentrate their muscle mass on their core, this is usually rejected as it makes the creature look "childish" and immature amongst its peers.



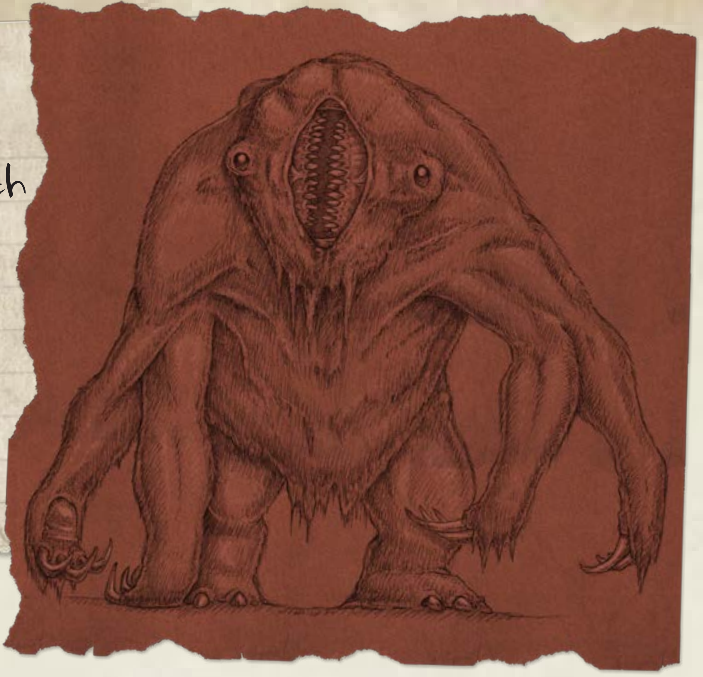
Gug

Nature: Matter-based dream behemoth

Weight: ~ 680 kg / 1500 lb.

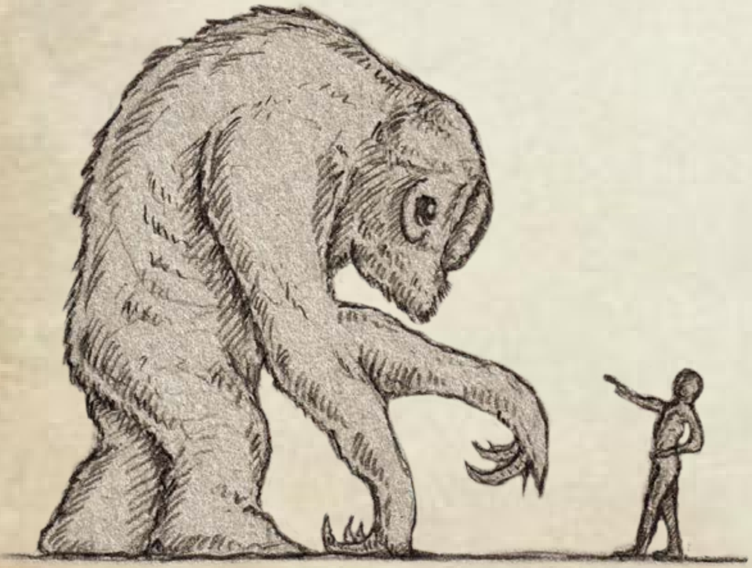
Height: ~ 5 m / 16 ft.

Habitat: Dreamlands' underground



Gugs are, without a doubt, the largest extant mammals inhabiting the Dreamland dimension. They can grow thrice the size of a regular human and several times as strong. These colossal bipeds are covered in black fur and have horrifying vertical mouths that open sideways. Their pinkish eyes are protected at the sides of their head by two bony plates and each of their arms gives rise to two forearms tipped with large grasping claws.

These carnivorous behemoths are somewhat of an evolutionary anachronism, as they evolved in the nutrient-rich Dreamland surface world, where they preyed on the native megafauna. Their kingdom was based around what is now the enchanted forest of Zoogs, but their colonies expanded even further.



Due to their self-esteem and avarice, Gugs challenged even the higher beings that inhabited the Dreamlands (commonly referred to as the Great Ones) and were thus banished from the Dreamlands surface world. Now these monsters live and feed on whatever they can scavenge in the underworld, savoring the day they'll rise back to their ancestral home.

Anatomical Features:

Gugs feature a very large, ursine-like body shape with some notable characteristics. They are clearly mammalian and usually walk as bipeds. Specimens have massive heads and upper limbs but short and muscular hindlimbs. Their body is covered in thick black fur, but environmental conditions have caused some specimens to lose their coats due to malnutrition and fungal infection.

Their principal, and most obvious, feature is their cranial distribution. The Gugs' teeth-filled mouth is very large and opens vertically instead of horizontally. Their eyes are located at the sides of the skull and protrude from a bony stalk that ends in a protective plate. Male Gugs usually feature larger bony plates and horns.

Their upper body and head rely on structural support from the overdeveloped scapulae and clavicles. However, this ensues in their neck being extremely rigid, as it is held in place by both musculature and the pectoral girdle. Their upper limbs are formed out of one upper arm with two forearms and two hands each, all tipped with long curved claws.

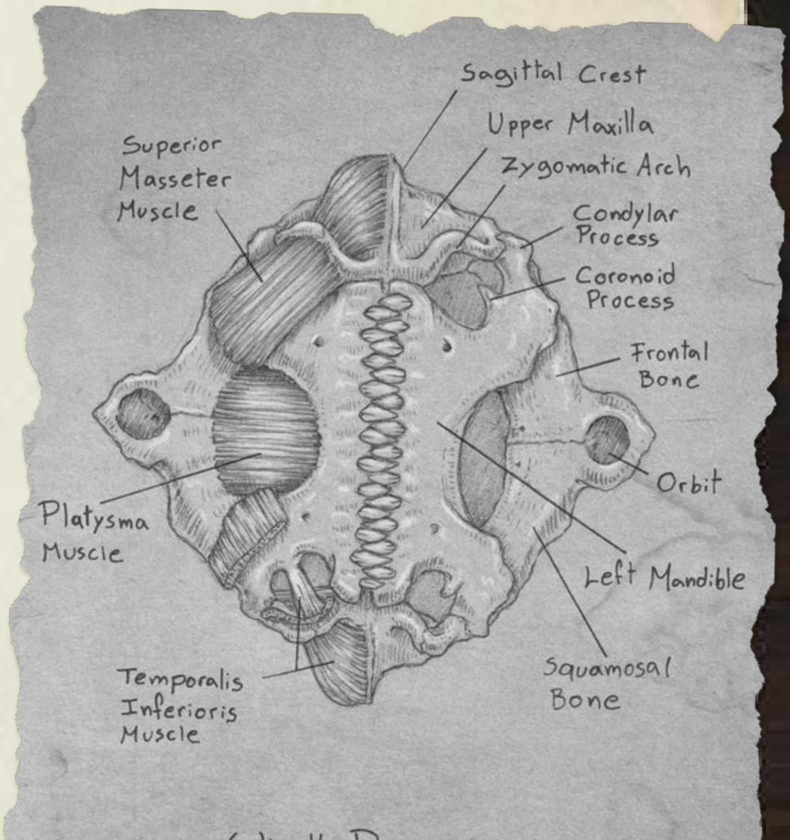
Dissection, while difficult, is fairly straightforward. The creature's skull has a unique bone distribution that allows its mechanical function. It has an upper and lower maxilla and zygomatic arches that articulate with two identical mandibles. Temporal and masseter muscles provide most of the creature's massive bite force. Opening the mouth is achieved thanks to the platysma, which is relatively underdeveloped when compared with the masticatory system. Finally, the bony plates are formed thanks to a unique protrusion in the articulation between the parietal and temporal bones.

Dissecting the creature's forelimbs shows a double set of bicep muscles and a tricipital muscle complex that allows for independent forearm movement. The caudal portion of the humerus has two ball joints that articulate with the disjointed ulna and radius. These form a set of two independent forearms that end in their own carpal-metacarpal-phalanges complex.

Biology & Ecology:

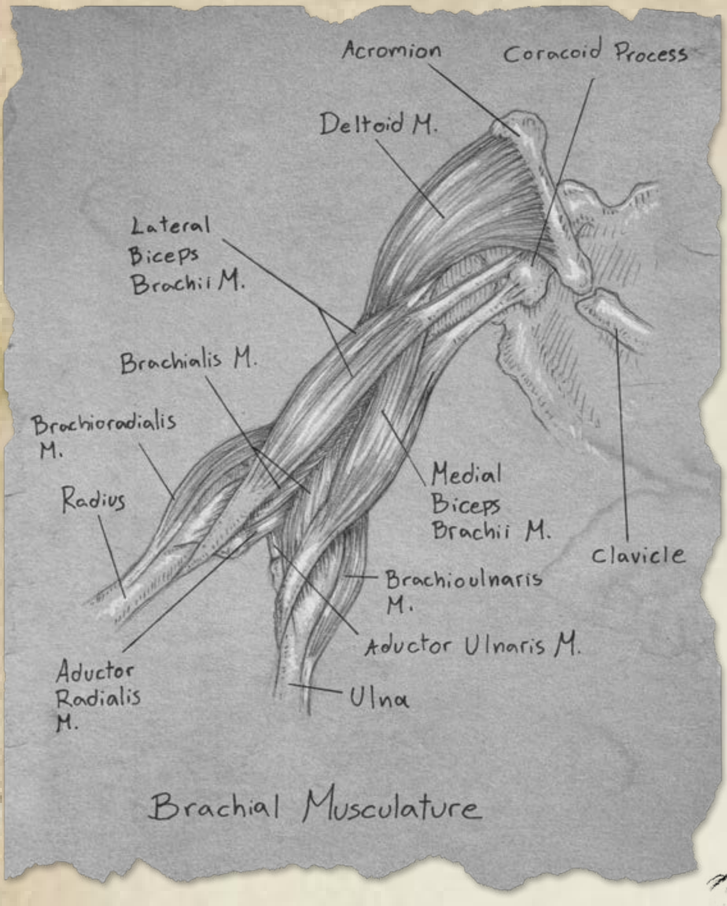
Gugs evolved in a natural niche that they no longer occupy, making them evolutionary anachronisms. Some adaptations, like their sheer size, probably allowed them to hunt large Dreamland herbivores in past ages. However, in their current environment, these adaptations have become nearly unsustainable. The change in habitat has resulted in some metabolic adaptations and increased incidence of malnutrition and disease among younger populations.

While natural carnivores, most Gugs can become omnivorous when starved. Their current environment has also caused a slowing down of their metabolism, making them cumbersome creatures and forcing them to nod off occasionally to save energy. Their regular diet is based on Ghast meat, fungal crops, and lower underground creatures like bats and rodents. Older Gug cities usually claim primacy over sources of animal protein, which allow them to grow larger in size and to retain their fur coatings. In contrast, younger populations that live in deeper tunnels tend to develop alopecia, dwarfism, and retinopathies. Their cognitive skills are also below Gug average due to their lack of iodine intake. This makes them both more feral and unpredictable than the ancient individuals.



Skull Dissection

Unless sick or wounded, most Gugs can live up to three hundred years and remain active members of their societies. However, their slow development and long gestational periods have caused a slow but persistent decline in population.



Brachial Musculature

Gugs have basic cognition and nonverbal language that depends on facial expressions and signs. Their lack of vocal cords impedes them from developing spoken language, but their keen eyesight allows them to easily identify their peers' body language.

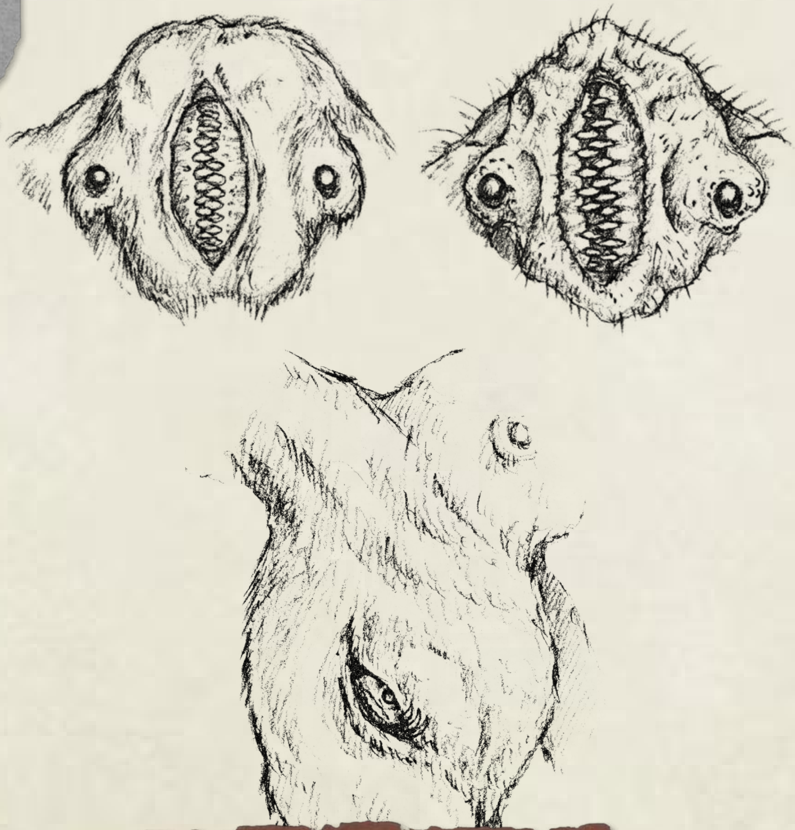
As a species they are proficient builders and use the environment to their favor. Their cyclopean cities are built by digging on ridges and mountains and carving them to their liking using their giant claws. Large or small, most Gug populations build their homes around at least one place of spiritual worship. Their culture is predominantly based on magical beliefs and superstition, which makes them fear Ghouls and graveyards even if those pose no real threat.

Development:

Gugs are marsupials and care for their young until they are old enough to fare on their own. This maturing process usually takes up to a decade but could be interrupted if the mother is harmed or ill. The fact that a female can only carry one youngling inside her marsupial sack results in Gugs reproducing only once every ten years or so.

Once the young Gug is able to leave its mother's side, it will try to find an unoccupied territory and dig its own dwelling. Their cognitive skills allow them to learn vicariously from their mothers even if they lack any form of formal instruction. Still, young Gugs are very vulnerable to the underground's predators and are the main target of Ghast raids.

While they usually work together and live in large groups, Gugs seem unable to show empathy toward other living creatures, which they hunt and torture without provocation.



Explorer's Note:

In spite of their size, Gugs are very stealthy creatures. Their lack of voice and their physical adaptations for ambush hunting make most encounters with these animals very short.

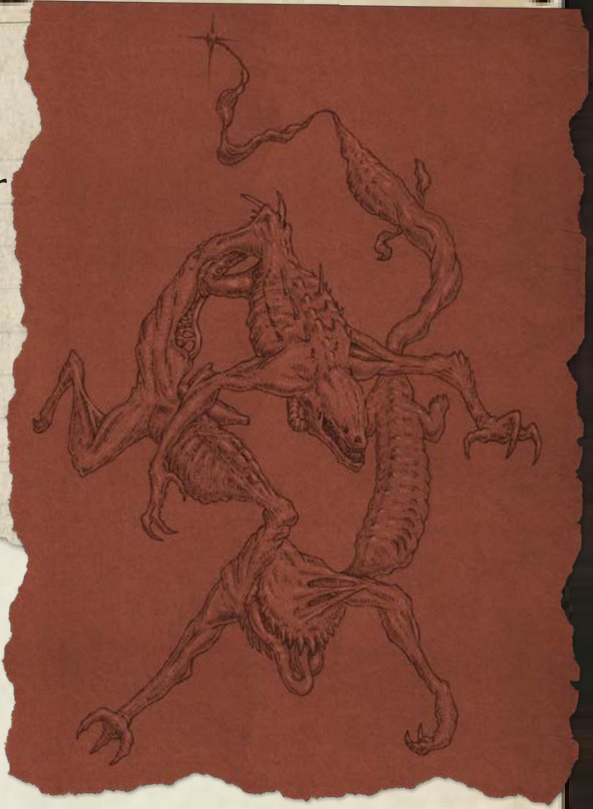
Hound of Tindalos

Nature: Transdimensional temporal predator

Weight: Unknown

Height: Unknown

Habitat: Outside time. May manifest temporarily in our space-time continuum



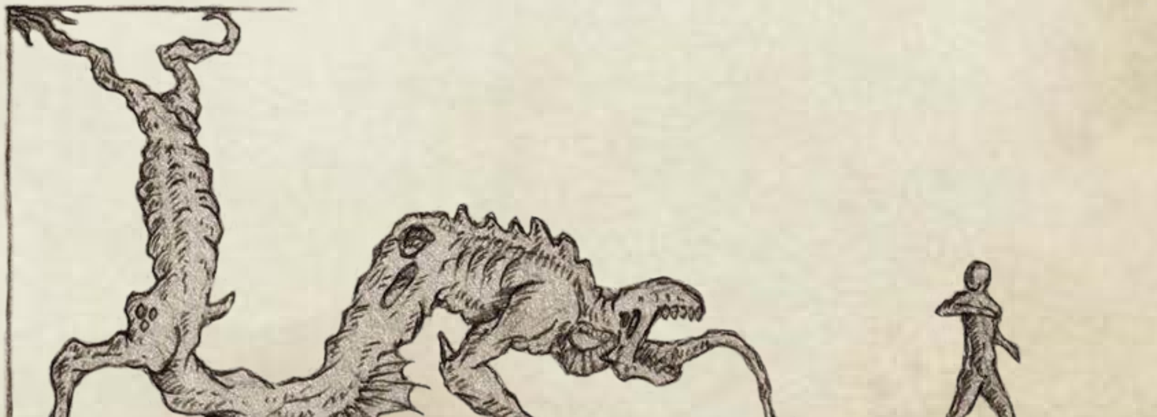
Hounds of Tindalos are so fundamentally different from organic creatures that their classification as “life forms” challenges our conception of what life means. Actually, the name “Hound of Tindalos” is but a general moniker used for a group of mostly unknown entities that live outside our space-time continuum. Their true nature remains a complete mystery due to the fact that our knowledge of them comes mostly from their temporal manifestations in three-dimensional spaces.

Hounds are vicious beings that hunt their prey throughout the very fabric of time, chasing and hounding their quarry (hence the name) until they can manifest as three-dimensional monsters. While their form, nature, and motives are all extremely variable (and mostly ignored), one fact seems to affect all Hounds of Tindalos: They can only manifest inside our universe through an angular dimensional junction.

Anatomical Features:

Hounds of Tindalos exist outside of our known spatial dimensions so, by definition, they have no real body to describe or dissect. However, their manifestation inside our three-dimensional universe requires a temporary husk they can use to kill their prey. While their specific shapes are always unique and variable between individuals, some general patterns have been observed.

Because of their physiology, not all Hounds of Tindalos generate organic bodies (see below). This makes their remains considerably harder



to study from an anatomical perspective. Because of this, only samples taken from organic husks will be described.

Hounds of Tindalos tend to form very elongated bodies that emerge from a local dimensional junction. Most individuals develop a single head and at least four limbs distributed along their growing axial skeleton. As they grow longer, more limbs may be generated depending on their need for structural support. Since Hounds have no use for fatty deposits or most internal organs, their overall appearance is rather gaunt. No two Hounds ever look the same, since their overall morphotype appears to be dependent on the local environment in which they emerge. Some Hounds may develop plant-like structures instead of beastial features while others may resemble arthropods. Even the same individual may manifest in various shapes in different environments.

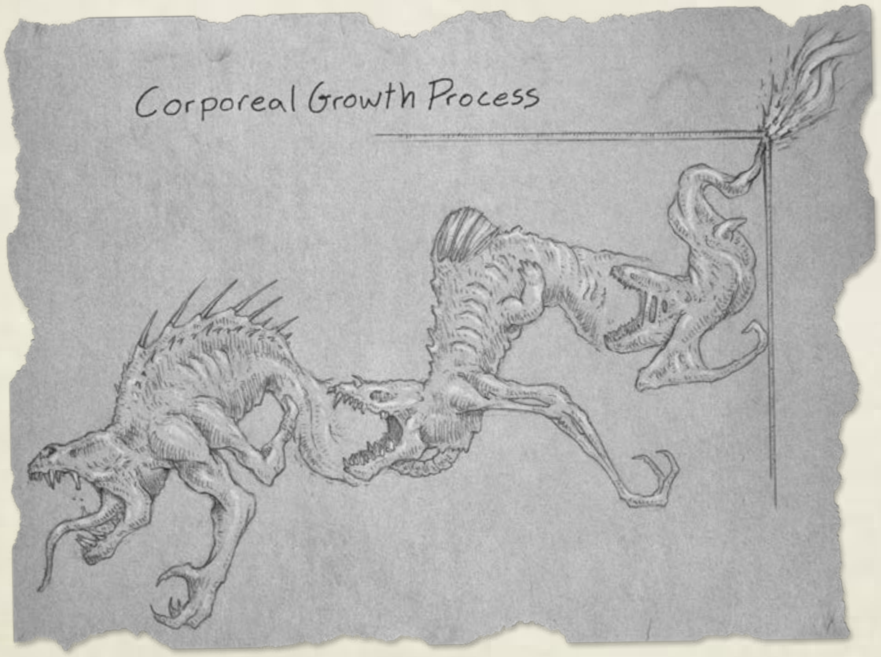
Dissecting a Hound of Tindalos' body grants very little insight to its physiology since it breaks down into a carbon-rich black sludge almost immediately after being severed from its dimensional junction. Ancient texts suggest that silicate-based hounds may be more resistant to degradation, but this has yet to be proven experimentally.

Biology & Ecology:

Hounds of Tindalos exist in a reality outside our space-time continuum. Being "beyond time" allows them to travel through timelines with the same ease with which we travel through space. Because of this, it would seem that spatial travel is as alien to them as temporal travel is to us. While it is generally accepted that Hounds occupy zero spatial dimensions when in their natural state, their extraspatial dimensions are unknown and may even be infinitely-dimensional.

Because the species regularly moves through time without directly interacting with space, perceiving three-dimensional creatures is virtually impossible for Hounds. In order to be detected by a Hound of Tindalos, its prey must distort the space-time continuum, causing it to leave a "quantum scent" that can be tracked down. A common example of this type of distortion is time travel, which leaves lasting traces in the fabric of time. Once it latches on to a scent, the creature will hunt its prey down tirelessly until it reaches an appropriate point in space-time where it can strike. To do this, Hounds of Tindalos need to align their angular components with a spatial intersection to force a dimensional junction.

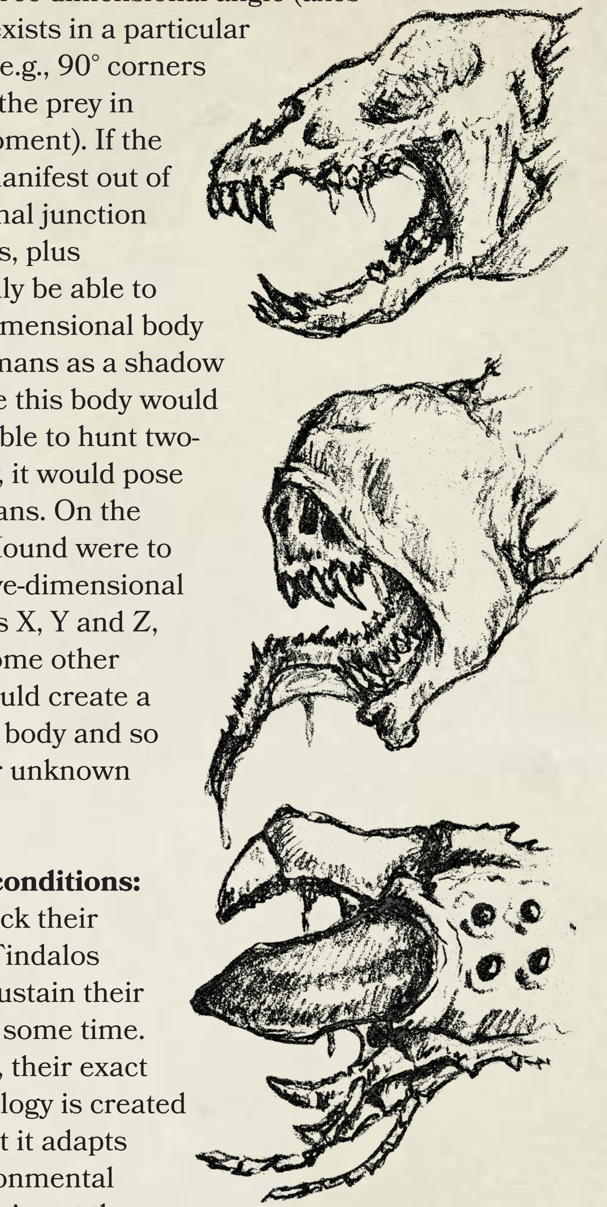
Once the angular junction is open, the Hound of Tindalos will pump immense amounts of energy to reconfigure local elements into molecules and tissue. The injection causes the creature to "grow" out of the three-dimensional angle as if from an umbilical cord. To sustain this energy pump, the junction must remain geometrically stable or the whole process will abort and collapse.



The hound's actual shape will depend on a number of factors:

1. **Number of angular dimensions that form the junction:** Hounds require at least four-dimensional junctions to be able to interact with three (or more) dimensional creatures (following the rule of n -1). This limitation

causes Hounds that prey on humans to emerge from a three-dimensional angle (axes X, Y and Z) that exists in a particular moment in time (e.g., 90° corners that coexist with the prey in any particular moment). If the Hound were to manifest out of a three-dimensional junction (e.g., X and Y axes, plus time), it would only be able to generate a two-dimensional body (perceived by humans as a shadow or illusion). While this body would theoretically be able to hunt two-dimensional prey, it would pose no threat to humans. On the other hand, if a Hound were to emerge from a five-dimensional junction (i.e., axes X, Y and Z, plus time, plus some other dimension), it would create a four-dimensional body and so on, through other unknown dimensions.



2. **Environmental conditions:** To effectively attack their prey, Hounds of Tindalos must be able to sustain their physical form for some time. Due to this effect, their exact shape and physiology is created in such a way that it adapts to the local environmental conditions (e.g., it is not the same to hunt on Yuggoth as on Earth). It is believed that Hounds are able to adapt to their environment by artificially organizing matter into a "living" body that evolves as it grows. Owing to their energy funnel, evolution is instantaneous as cells and tissues grow and die thousands of times per second. While most of their bodies resemble reptiles, mammalians, or arthropods, some Hounds evolve silicate-based husks, or even angular complexes, sustained by inorganic homeostatic processes.

Development:

A Hound of Tindalos' development cycle is unknown and, even if it were known, would be completely alien to our understanding as it is beyond what we conceive as "living". It must be understood that, under our conception of birth, Hounds are never born, as they have always been. Therefore, they cannot, technically, be called living organisms, and instead should be understood as complex entities that use life merely as a tool that can be disposed of once the process has fulfilled its purpose.

Since these creatures move willfully in time, it's been proposed that they are restrained by the rules of space. To illustrate this, one can think of a human, who can voluntarily move itself through space but is subject to the chronological flow of time. In a similar manner, a Hound of Tindalos can move through time, but is unable to move forwards or backwards in space. This theory has led to the belief that for a Hound to be able to manipulate space, it must invest some amount of energy comparable to the energy needed for a human to travel through time.

Explorer's Note:

The only certain way to avoid being attacked by a Hound of Tindalos is to avoid being around corners of any sort. This includes natural and artificial corners alike.

Hunting Horror

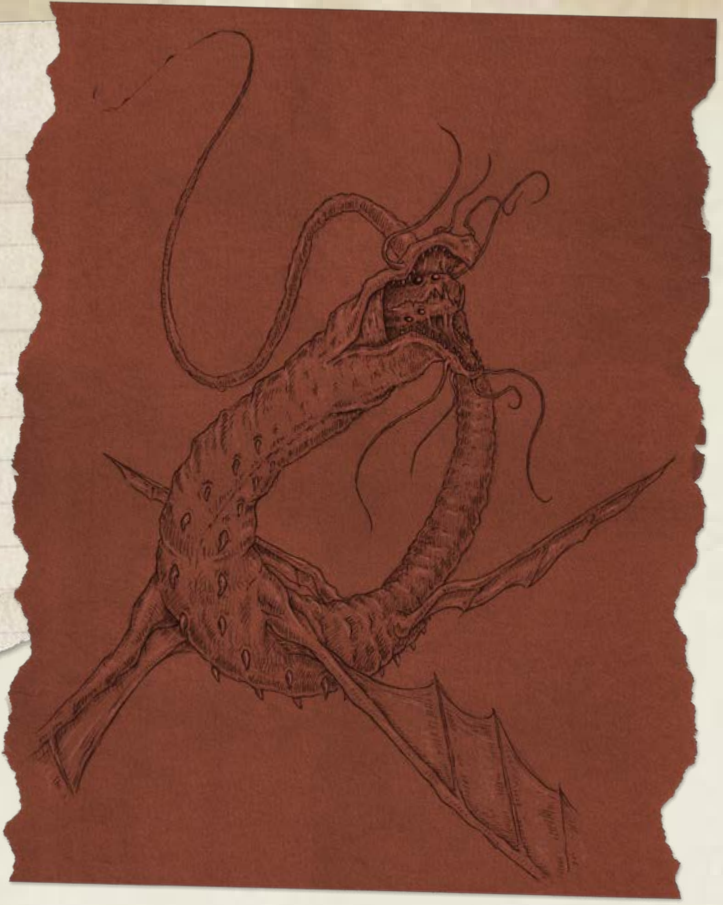
Nature: Transdimensional stalking projection

Weight: ~ 1800 kg / 4000 lb.*

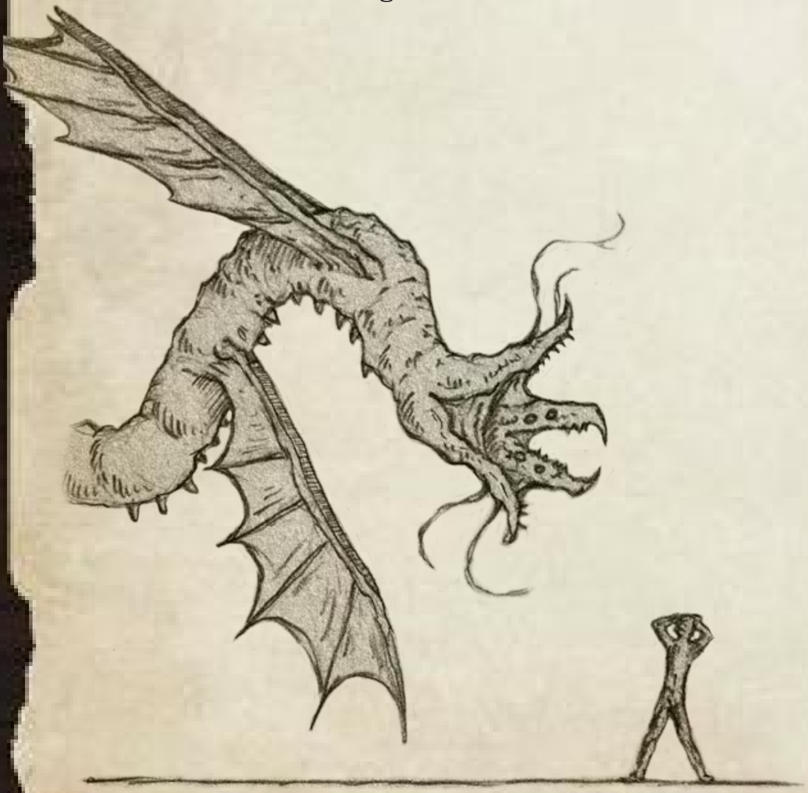
Wingspan: ~ 6 m / 20 ft.

Length: Unknown

Habitat: Simultaneous existence in material and non-material universes



Hunting Horrors are a fascinating example of how humans' understanding of reality is, at best, extremely limited. They resemble large wormlike creatures with membranous wings, multiple eyes, and massive jaws. Their tails have never been studied because their bodies seem to stretch endlessly toward the sky. This has led to the theory that they are not individual creatures, but parts of a larger, transdimensional being.



Vicious and relentless, these hunters stalk their prey from beyond the night sky until they find an appropriate moment to strike. Their flight alone is bizarre enough, as they seem to float in the air like marionettes, completely ignoring our laws of physics. Worse still, their extradimensional connection means that what one creature feels, senses, or wills affects all others. This suggests that hurting a Hunting Horror is sure to hurt all of them, alerting them of danger, and triggering a monstrous swarm.

Anatomical Features:

Hunting Horrors feature large, serpentine bodies that are loosely reminiscent of caecilians. Their proximal (pseudocephalic) segment contains their mouthparts and eyes, while the rest of their body features their wings and various sensory organs. The caudal portion of the body stretches indefinitely and must be disconnected to effectively study the creature and prevent tissue regeneration. While all Hunting Horrors have this same general body structure, their individual traits vary greatly from specimen to specimen.

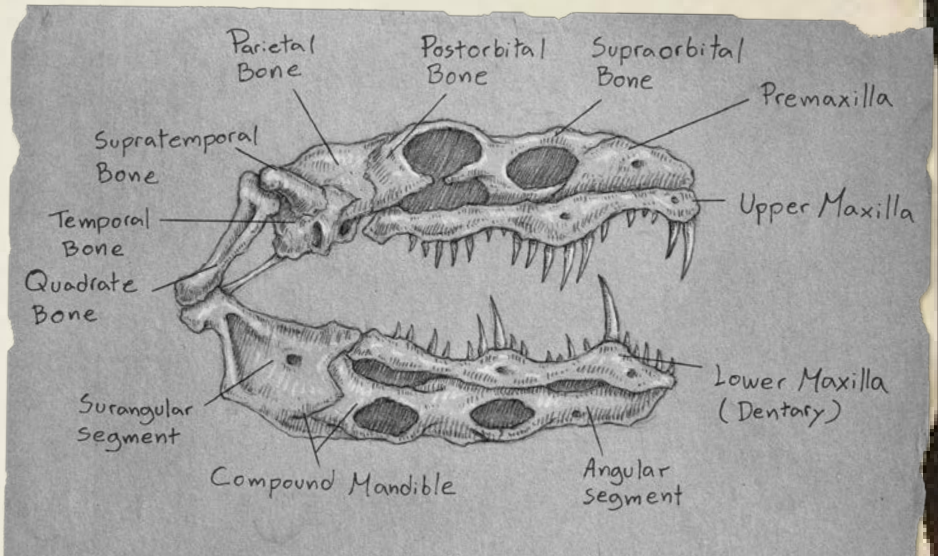
The Hunting Horrors' pseudocephalic segment contains the creatures' most specialized organs. It is also the most variable between specimens. Their mouth is usually jawed in a manner similar to that of snakes, where different maxillary bones do not fuse together but are instead connected by an elastic ligament. Depending on the individual, the mucosa-covered mouth can be found surrounded by a muscular, teeth-filled sheath (or rostrum) that opens, petal-like, to hold its prey. Other variants have harder squamous skin that wraps around the mouth and forms a protective snout. The creature's eyes are distributed in groups of three or four per side and usually face to the side. Finally, most Hunting Horrors' heads have more variable individual features, such as sensory tentacles and other grasping organs.

Immediately behind the pseudocephalic segment, one or two pairs of large, membranous wings stretch to the sides of the Hunting Horror's body. While impressive in size, these are not used for flying, which is evidenced by their strange anatomical distribution. Their skeletal structure is unlike that of any known winged vertebrate. Instead, the Hunting Horror's wings have more in common with primitive sharks' pectoral fins, with an axial bony segment made of mesomeres and several radials emerging from it.

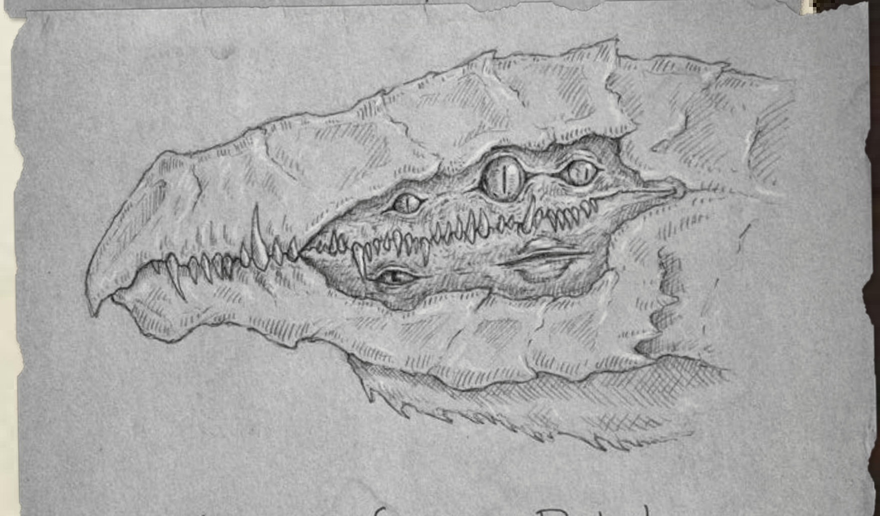
The rest of the Hunting Horror's body features few additional organs other than occasional tentacles, cirri and gill-like breathing openings. Its dissection reveals a disturbing lack of internal organs and, instead, the whole body seems to be composed of an esophagus and groups of long nerves that emerge from sensory ganglia and stretch endlessly towards the caudal portion.

Biology & Ecology:

Contrary to reason, the Hunting Horror is not an individual creature. Instead, the seemingly discrete Hunting Horrors are believed to be different parts of a single, unknown transdimensional being. Because of their shape and presence of sensory organs, some scholars have compared them to antennae with which this theoretical creature could interact with our universe. This theory is also supported by the creatures' flight pattern, which ignores all known physics and, instead, resembles the movement of a marionette or an underwater nematode.



Skull Sample



Alternate Species Detail

Their wings are not meant for flight (as evidenced by their anatomy) and are instead used to help the creature maneuver when under an atmosphere or inside a closed environment (e.g., a building or a cave). Their wings are also used to aid their finer motricity requirements while flying or navigating on land.

To better understand the nature of a Hunting Horror, exobiologists have devised the following simple but effective metaphor:

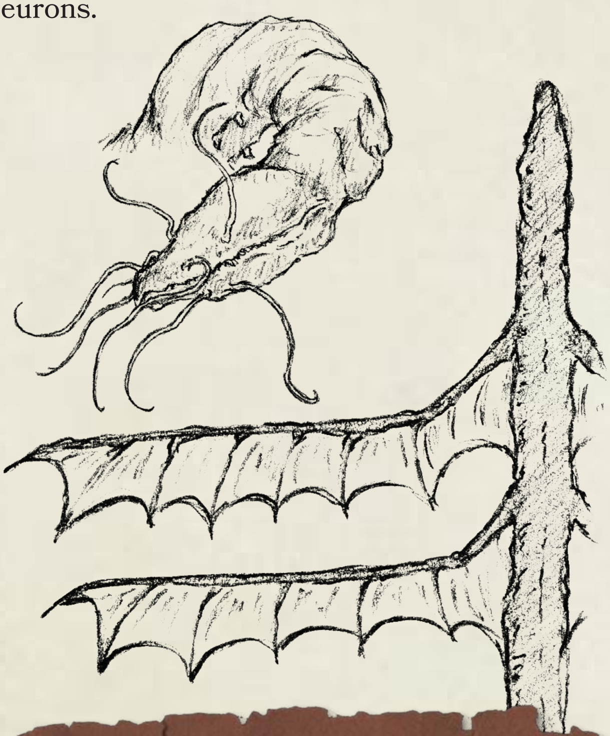
"Imagine that our three-dimensional universe is like a bowl of water. This is where space and time would be contained. If one were to submerge one's fingers halfway into the bowl, an organism staring from within the bowl would believe each finger to be an individual creature. This would confuse the organism since the fingers do not float inside the water like it does and, instead, they move beyond laws it can conceive. Unless it obtained the ability to "see" beyond the dimensions that compose its universe (a.k.a., the bowl of water), it would never be able to fully understand how all fingers are part of the same hand, which moves them at will according to a different set of laws"

A Hunting Horror's physiology is mostly taken care of outside of our universe, as evidenced by their lack of organs. All sensory receptors connect to massive axons that travel axially through the body, connecting only to smaller relay ganglia but never reaching a brain. The same goes for vessels that travel endlessly without reaching a heart. The creature's mouth connects to a toothed pharynx and an endless esophagus. Thanks to its potent peristaltic movements and its intraluminal teeth, the esophagus progressively dismembers and breaks down large prey into smaller parts that can be digested by proteolytic enzymes found in its saliva. So far, no studied specimen has included a gastric sack or other digestive organ.

Hunting Horrors are extremely sensitive to visual and mechanical stimuli. While they usually hunt alone, they are always aware of what other Horrors are sensing. Because of this, hurting one individual will cause pain in all of them, alerting them of potential danger (or prey) and drawing them towards the area. This reaction seems to be similar to the arc reflexes found in vertebrates, where hurting one limb leads to a coordinated retreat from the ipsilateral part of the body and triggering a contralateral defense.

Development:

There is no known information on Hunting Horrors' development. It has been suggested that the variability in the creatures' procephalic segments would mean that they are all specialized to fulfill different functions within the larger being. This implies that they develop outside our dimension from some sort of stem organ or tissue in a manner similar to animal neurons.



Explorer's Note:

If possible, Hunting Horrors will eat their prey whole and rely on their esophagus to rip it apart. This has led some to try to slay the creatures from the inside after being ingested. No successful attempts have been recorded.

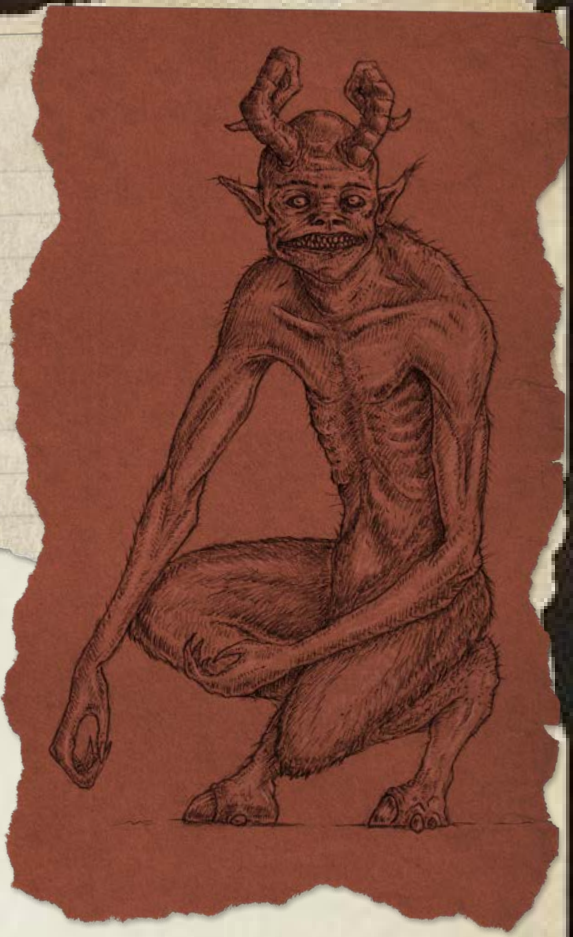
Leng Folk

Nature: Matter-based dream humanoids

Weight: ~ 80 kg / 175 lb.

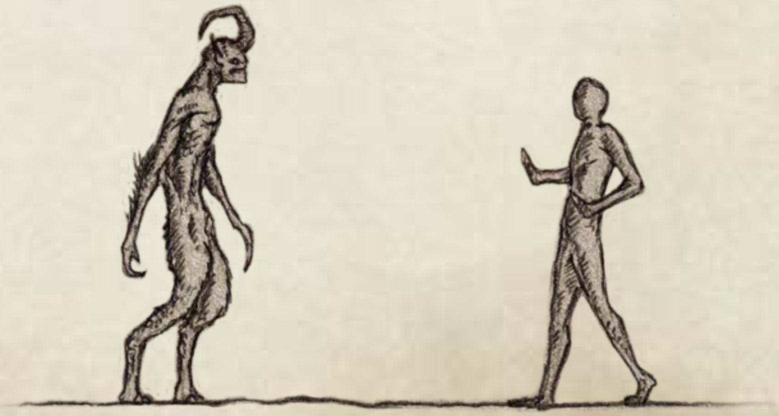
Height: ~ 1.9 m / 6.2 ft.

Habitat: Dreamlands' plateau of Leng and slave colonies on the far side of the moon



Leng Folk are distant relatives to humans that diverged into the Dreamlands and evolved there. Their general appearance is reminiscent of classical myth, as they mix their humanoid features with hairy bodies, horned heads, and hooved feet. While their strange facial traits usually cause repulsion among other dream dwellers, they can be easily mistaken for humans when disguised.

Native to the valleys near Leng, these creatures evolved language, cognition, and culture in a manner similar to humans. Their tribal ways and cooperation eventually led to the building of a large city by the name of Sarkomand. Although flourishing, their civilization did not last for long, as near-simultaneous disasters sealed their fate. The first calamity came in the form of new predators that were probably drawn to the primeval energies of the Plateau. These were the giant Spiders of Leng, which mercilessly massacred the natives as they emerged in droves from the valleys below.



As their failing civilization struggled to survive, the remaining Leng Folk were then invaded by the lunar slave-traders known as Moon Beasts, who kidnapped men, women, and children and used them for labor, food, and sacrifice.

Anatomical Features:

Leng Folk are anatomically very similar to waking world hominins. They have two arms and two legs, stand in a somewhat hunched posture, and are covered in varying amounts of body hair. Their slightly elongated face, their bloated abdomen, and their long arms suggest that the people of Leng diverged from human ancestors sometime before the appearance of the genus homo.

Their most distinguishing trait is probably their face, which features two small, slanted eyes with a relative degree of hypertelorism when compared to humans. On their forehead, both frontal bones serve as a base for bulky keratinous horns. Their nasal bones are underdeveloped and flat with little cartilage tissue that forms large nostrils. Both horns and noses are smaller in females, a clear sign of sexual dimorphism. Leng Folk usually appear to be "grinning" constantly because of their large mouths, which are filled with larger and sharper teeth than other primates.

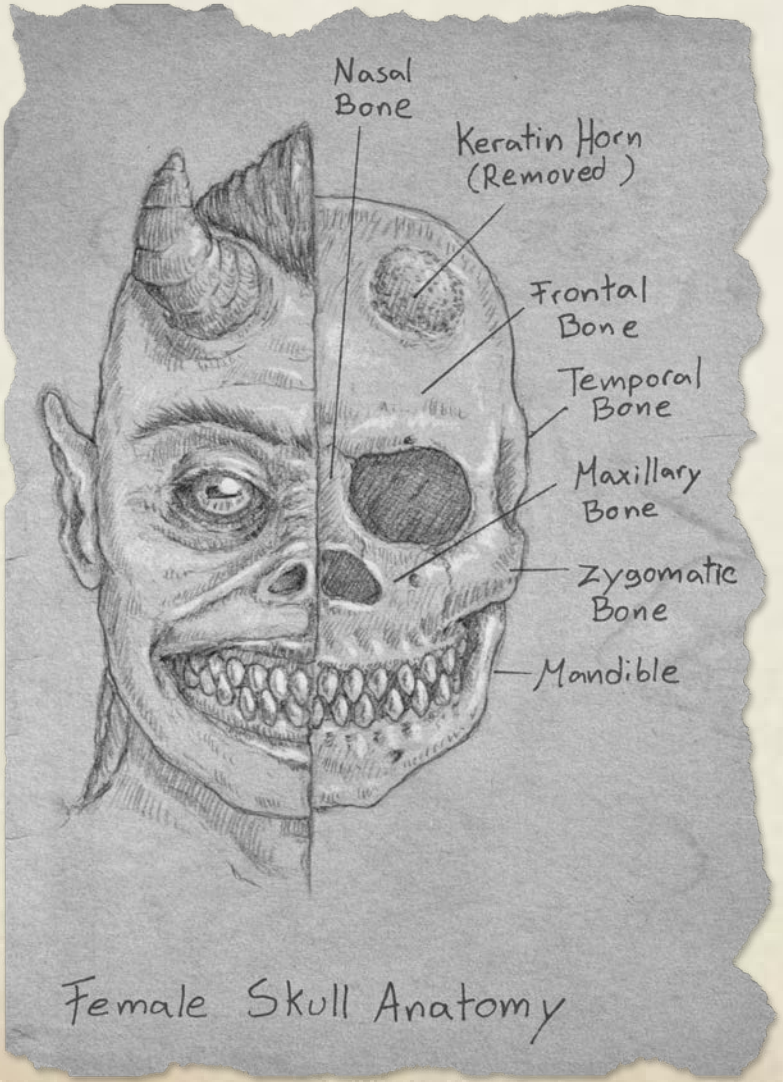
Another unusual feature of Leng Folk is the presence of hooves instead of feet. Their overall anatomy is similar to odd-toed ungulates, particularly equines, where all but one large toe supports the creature's weight. Two vestigial toes can usually be identified behind the cannon bone (metacarpus). The fact that some specimens may retain up to three of their toes suggests that this is a very unstable trait between members of the species.

Leng Folk also differ from humans in epidermal and adnexal features. Most of their body is still covered in a thin layer of brown fur. Their head, back, legs, and forearms have longer and darker hair while their abdomen and face are almost hairless. Sexual dimorphism can also be observed in their skin color, as males usually have a lighter skin than females. The higher frequency of dark patches or spots in female subjects suggests that they might be the result of hormone-induced melasma.

Biology & Ecology:

The evolutionary history of Leng Folk is shrouded in mystery as they share many ancestral traits with waking-world hominins but diverge in other, and very important, ways. One theory proposed by cryptoanthropologists suggests that their lineage branched off from australopithecines early on during the Pleistocene. After their speciation, these creatures appear to have been hunted by an unknown species that transported the group to the Dreamlands to serve as cattle. At some point during this process, a surviving group seems to have escaped their captors and settled on the feared Plateau of Leng, where no one dared to look for them. There, exposed to the primeval energies that emanate from the plateau's underground, they mutated and acquired most of their, now characteristic, divergent traits. While very circumstantial, support for this theory comes from the mummified remains of hominin-like beings found in Leng (believed to be the Leng Folk's hooveless and hornless ancestors) whose bones had been cut or pierced. Similar remains have been reported near Parg, where a partial skeleton was found bound in magnetite chains.

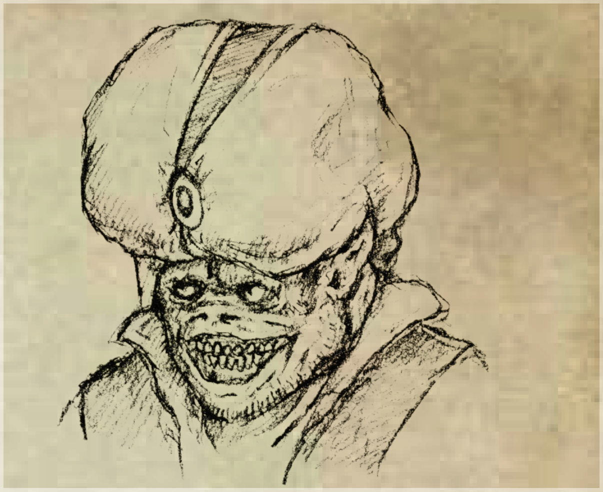
An alternate theory, proposed by eastern oneirofolklorists, suggests that the men of Leng are related to the mysterious Tcho-Tcho tribes, which were believed to have descended from the amphibian "Miri-Nigri". While hard to prove empirically, it looks to correlate with some theories of how the Dream dimensions work and certain tablets found near dimensional junctions that connect Leng to present-day Asia. According to this theory, the ancient Tcho-Tcho



tribes attempted to colonize the Dreamlands but were unable to successfully project on their own. Aided by their ritual knowledge in hyperphysics, some hierophants attempted to force their way into the dream world by merging their minds with those of other sentient subjects. This process effectively twisted the subject creatures and caused a split in their psychic structure. Trapped in the Dreamlands, the monstrous Leng Folk were the inhuman result of the incomplete and distorted Tcho-Tcho projections. What was left of the tribes in the waking-world was psychically fractured and became inexplicably vicious. Because of this botched process, some legends refer to Tcho-Tchos as "soulless".

Unlike their origins, Leng Folk history while in the Dreamlands is better understood. While in the civilization's prime, Leng Folk demonstrated advanced cognition and developed the largest known settlement in the region of Leng: the city of Sarkomand. However, after the arrival of the Spiders of Leng and the Moon Beasts' invasion, Leng Folk slowly degenerated into their current form. Local folklore places Sarkomand's doom at around one million years before humans first appeared in the Dreamlands, but this has not been confirmed. Still demonstrating some intelligence, wild Leng Folk now live in small nomadic groups and build temporary settlements for protection. How many individuals exist in the wild regions of Leng is unknown.

Enslaved Leng Folk can usually be found near coastal Dreamland cities (particularly Dylath-Leen) where they do their masters' bidding. Dressed as humans with turbans and small shoes, they trade their masters' jewels for other goods that are then transported back to the moon. While bizarre in appearance and unempathetic, their humanoid looks make them better traders than their monstrous, batrachian-like enslavers.



Development:

Leng Folk develop the same way as other primates but have shorter infancies than humans. Unlike most Dreamland mammals, Leng Folk are not marsupials and give birth to one or two newborns after about 8 months of gestation. Babies are then cared for by their mothers, who provide them with protection and nurturing. Their innate grasping reflex allows them to travel while holding on to their mother's fur in a manner similar to apes, monkeys, and lemurs.

Infant Leng Folk are omnivorous after their first year of lactation. Present-day individuals feed mostly on arthropods, mushrooms, and occasional Shantak eggs to sustain their protein needs. The lack of fatty acids and iron in their diet appears the main cause of their diminished cognitive development. Enslaved individuals live in worse conditions and are prone to disease and early death. Witness accounts tell of larger slaves who are overfed to serve an unknown purpose.

Explorer's Note:

Leng Folk have natural resistances to many forms of toxic substances. Because of this, any attempt to poison or intoxicate one of these creatures is bound to fail.

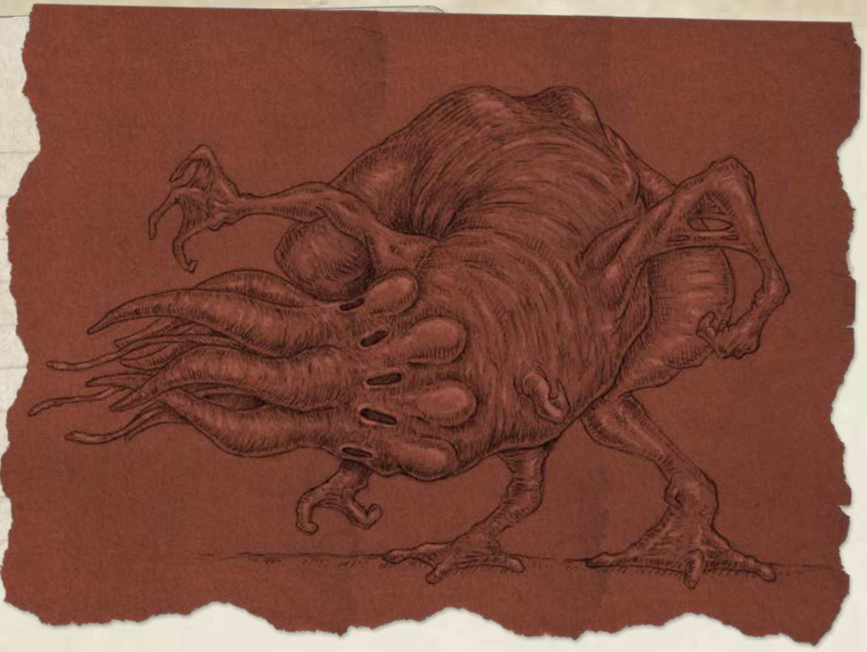
Moon-Beast

Nature: Matter-based lunar enslavers

Weight: ~ 230 kg / 500 lb.

Height: ~ 1.5 m / 5 ft.

Habitat: Dreamlands' far side of the moon



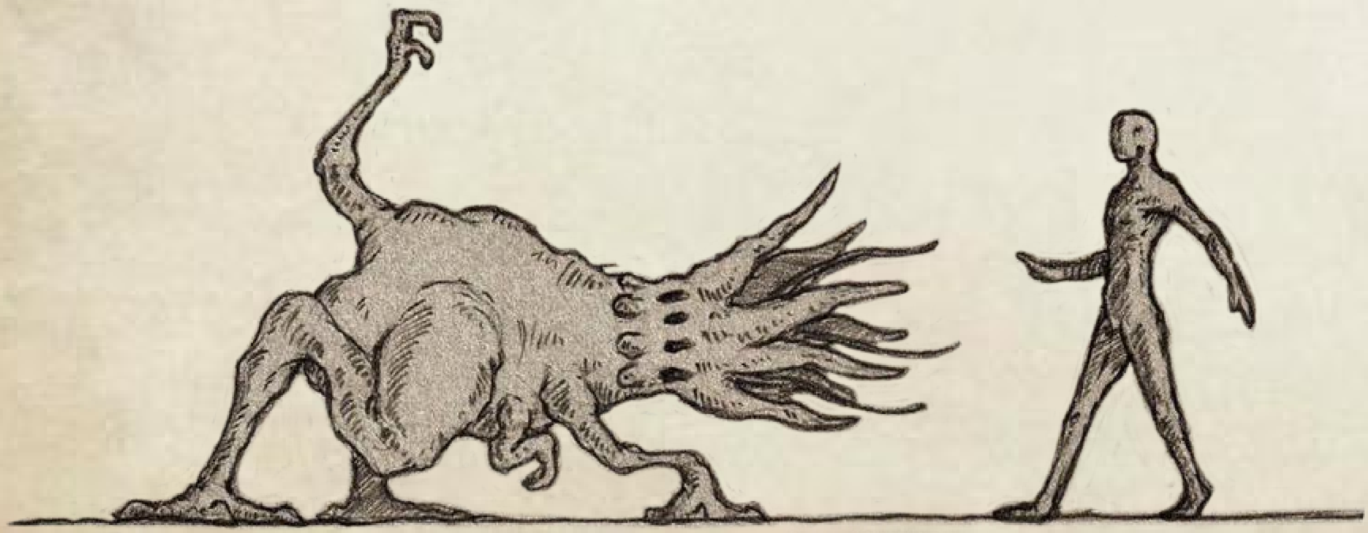
Moon-Beasts are almost universally despised since both their appearance and behavior are equally foul. They resemble large, bloated batrachians with multiple limbs and a crown of tentacles where their face ought to be. Their slimy form is able to expand and contract at will, changing shape depending upon their needs. Though intelligent, these are cruel creatures and are incapable of any form of empathy or emotion.

They are renowned servants of the transdimensional beings known as Outer Gods and live to serve their masters' wills in exchange of the occasional favor. To achieve this goal, Moon-Beasts often raid other lands and enslave their defeated inhabitants. Once captive, these unfortunate creatures are used for forced labor, ritual torture, food, and sacrifice.

Anatomical Features:

The Moon-Beasts' overall shape is similar to that of a large batrachian with a bulbous abdomen, four to six limbs and a tentacled head. They have some control over their flexible shapes, which allows them to expand and contract their bodies if needed. They can even grow new limbs at will.

Their skin is pale and covered with protective slime, which allows them to live outside an atmosphere. Their soft bodies are mildly resistant to trauma and do not reveal many skeletal features. They lack any form of evident skin (adnexal) structures.



Moon-Beasts' limbs are usually long and flexible, featuring strong muscular development and multiple joints. Their hands have four fingers and an opposing thumb, which allow them to easily handle whips and other torture devices.

They have large, stubby heads which lack any form of visual organs. Around their neck, a ring of simple membraned apertures seems to function as auditory organs. Most notable are the two groups of tentacles that grow out of their snout and surround an internal toothed oral disc. Thicker, shorter tentacles are perfectly adapted for grasping and holding prey, while longer and thinner appendages are used to inject venom (see below).

Dissection of a dead Moon-Beast shows that its structure is supported by a relatively simple cartilaginous skeleton. Interestingly, this structure is not dependent on a backbone, which points to a different evolutionary path than that of chordates. Its digestive and cardiovascular systems are not differentiated, instead being made up of a blind coelenteron with numerous branches. Its nervous system is fairly simple and can be found between two gastric sacks in the abdomen.

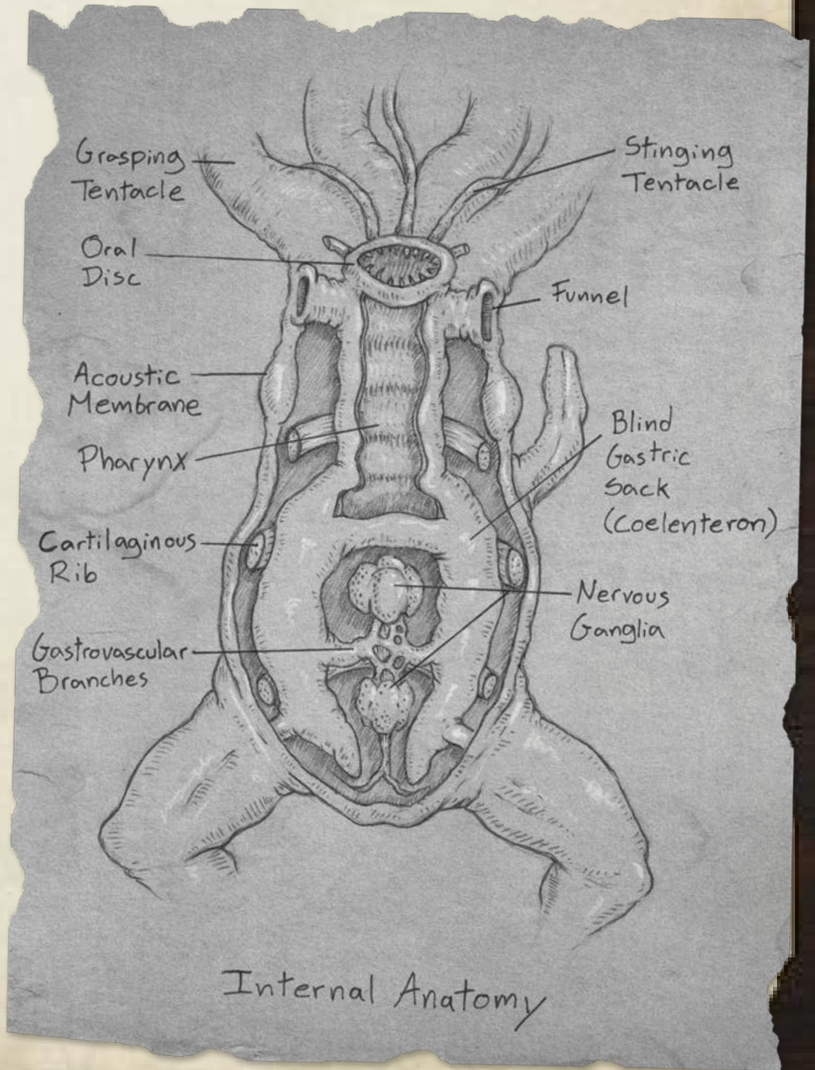
Biology & Ecology:

Oneirobiologists have noted that Moon-Beasts are biologically similar to early cnidarians. They have also proposed that the species originated in the Dreamlands but were accidentally transported to the moon by early colonizers. In contrast, exobiologists have noted some structural and behavioral similarities between Moon-Beasts and Servitors of the Outer Gods, suggesting instead that they belong to the same family of deep-space beings.

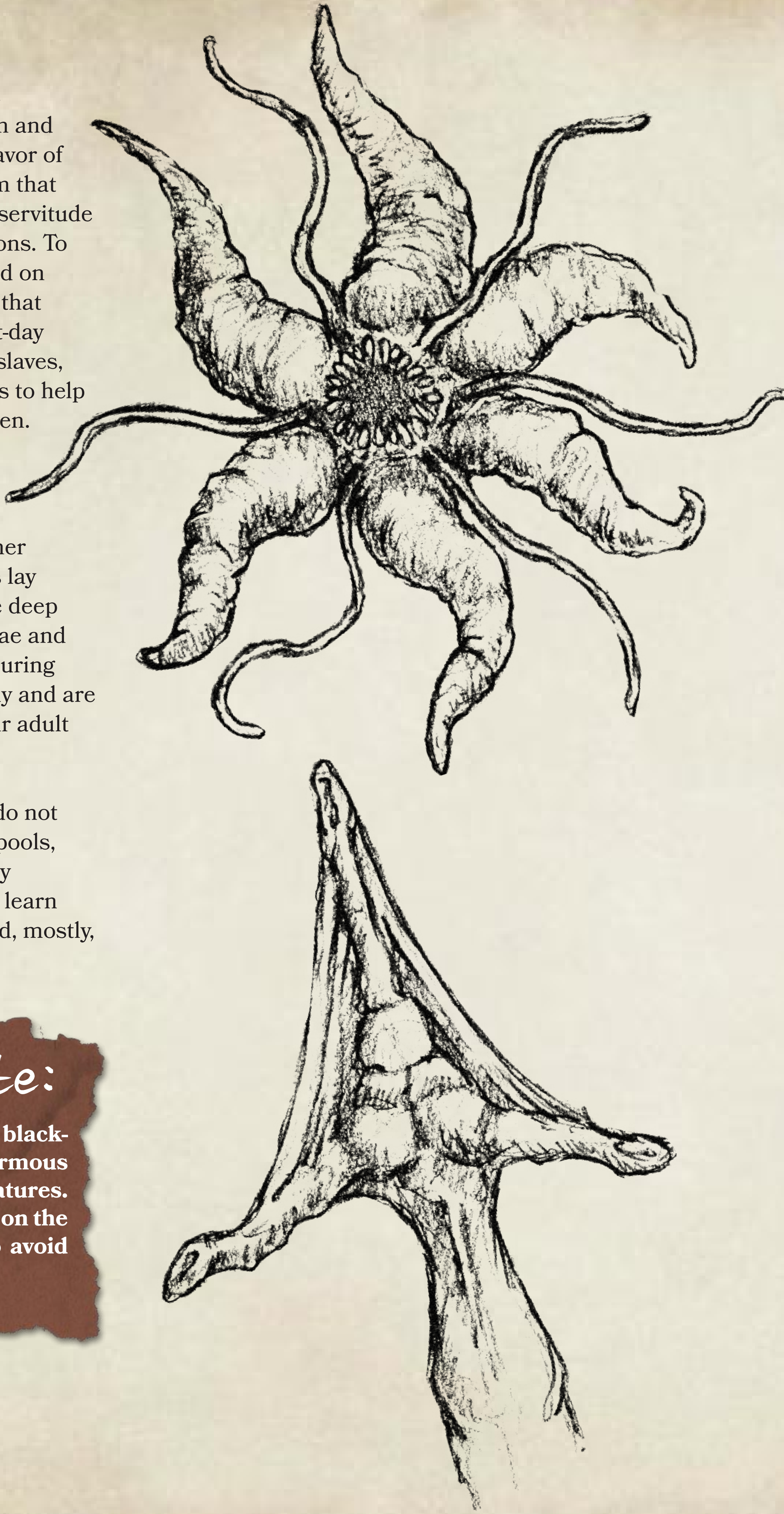
They are known to be facultative anaerobes, meaning they can switch between two different metabolic routes depending on the presence or lack of oxygen. While they are also known to be carnivorous, they can spend weeks without any form of sustenance.

Their tentacles are divided into grasping and stinging varieties. Grasping tentacles are thick and surprisingly strong, making them very effective at constricting prey. Stinging tentacles, on the other hand, are fairly weak but are covered in nematocysts, which inject a neurotoxin when in contact with their prey. In humans, this toxin causes local necrosis and sudden psychotic breaks. The toxin's molecular similarity to NMDA blockers seems to be responsible for the latter effect.

Moon-Beasts are generally thought to be intelligent creatures, but no attempt at communication has been successful so far. Their lack of empathy and emotion makes them very difficult to deal with, as they are incapable of seeing beyond their immediate motivations. Because of this, Moon-Beasts are usually shunned across different universes.



Though primitive, these creatures have developed novel forms of transportation and architecture thanks to the occasional favor of transdimensional beings. It would seem that gaining this favor through a lifetime of servitude is the only motivation behind their actions. To achieve this, they have historically relied on enslaved species from different worlds that were tortured into submission. Present-day Moon-Beasts mainly use Leng Folk as slaves, making use of their human-like features to help trade their massive rubies in Dylath-Leen.



Development:

Moon-Beasts' development cycle is rather similar to that of jellyfish. Fertile adults lay tiny eggs in spawning pools built inside deep lunar craters. There, they hatch as larvae and slowly develop into their polyp stage. During this stage they are unable to move freely and are vulnerable until they can grow into their adult form.

Because of their nature, Moon-Beasts do not care for their young or their spawning pools, which are left to fare on their own. They have no form of education, and instead learn through observation, trial and error, and, mostly, behavioral reinforcement.

Explorer's Note:

Moon Beasts travel in large, black-sailed vessels that trade enormous rubies in exchange for living creatures. Unless one seeks to end in a cage on the far side of the moon, it's best to avoid these ships altogether.

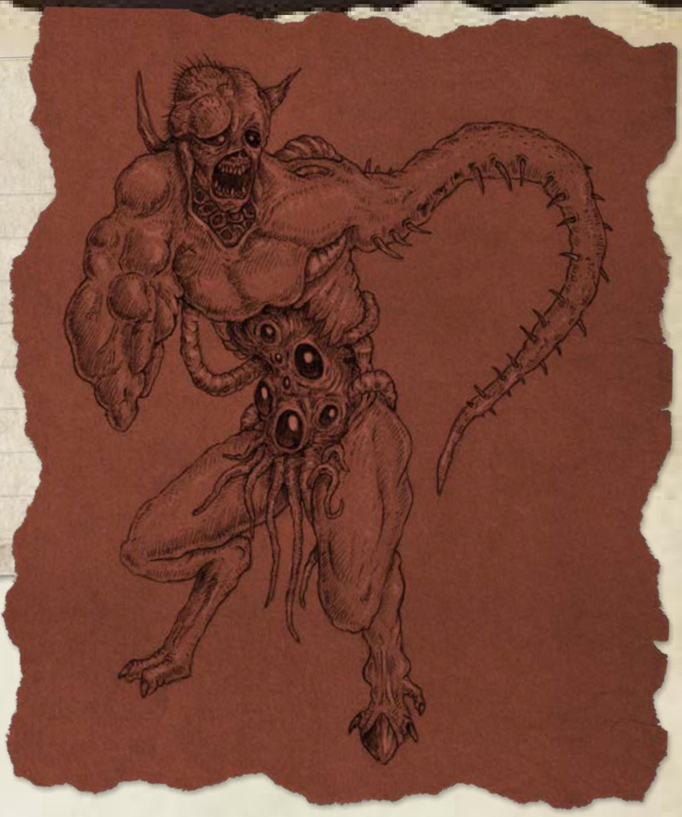
Mutant Satyr

Nature: Matter-based mutated humanoid

Weight: Variable

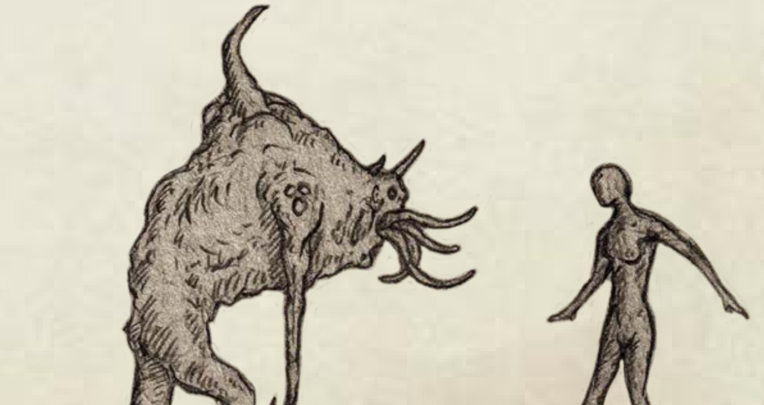
Height: Variable

Habitat: Nonspecific



Even if Satyrs get their names from the classical mythical hybrids, they have nothing to do with each other. First of all, these are not actually members of a single species or family. Instead, the term Mutant Satyr refers to a spectrum-type classification of otherwise unclassifiable life-forms. To be considered a Satyr, a naturally evolved organism must have suffered warping mutations as a result of exposure to transdimensional beings or gates. These mutations are usually so serious that the original creature is almost unrecognizable.

While some creatures may choose to become Satyrs to fulfill their own goals, most mutants are either the result of experimentation or inadvertent exposure to high-level energy sources. In either case, the result is usually unpredictable and primal.



Anatomical Features:

Satyr Mutants can be the result of animal, plant, or fungal mutation. This description will focus on humanoid Satyrs, as they are the most common in our local environments. These creatures generally retain some sort of anthropomorphic shape while in early and mid-stages of mutation and develop some of the following traits:

- **Additional limbs or tentacles:** Satyrs usually have additional appendages that are the result of tissue redistribution or increased mitotic activity. Newly-grown limbs can be shaped like arms, claws, or pincers, and may contain aberrant traits like mouths and sensory organs. Tentacles are fairly common and are used for grasping, sensing, and stinging purposes, depending on the individual.

- **Head and face modifications:** Satyr Mutants get their name from their malformed faces, which eventually become expressionless and animal-like. Additional facial features include growths, horns, mouths, eyes, and reshaping of the skull.

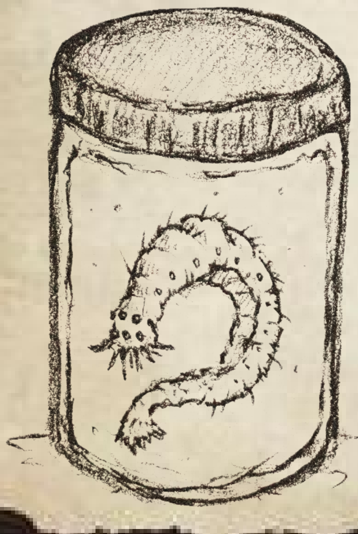
- **Specialized organs:** Some Satyrs, especially those resulting from controlled mutation, can develop highly specialized organs like gills, trunks, wings, and the like. While these organs are functional in most studied samples, they are not as efficient as their naturally evolved counterparts.

- **Extradimensional parasites:** Some Satyrs are created through exposure to extradimensional parasites, which invade the host's tissue and form aberrant limbs and structures. These become vital to the host's physiology and their removal may cause fatal hemodynamic shock.

While additional organs and tissues are very common and eye-catching, more fundamental mutations are the result of twisting the creatures' original structures. These are often referred to as malformations and may include:

- **Tumor growths:** Higher mitotic activity usually results in chaotic cellular growth which, in turn, gives rise to different types of tumors. Malign tumors are not rare and often result in less functional creatures with higher metabolic needs. Teratomas are by far the most common tumoral growths and usually contain hair, fat, muscle, bone fragments. and teeth.

- **Aberrant bone fusion:** If the subject is exposed to the energy source from a young age, it is fairly common to find incomplete fusion of immature bones. These include, but are not limited to, incomplete closure of cranial sutures, malformations in long bones' metaphysis, and reabsorption of the sternocostal cartilage.



- **Malformation of mature bones:** If there is not enough room for growth, affected bones can become twisted, bent or fused with each other. This often results in abnormal biomechanics, which in turn further stimulate the body to generate new adaptive mutations.

Dissecting a Satyr Mutant can be quite laborious because their cumulative mutations often lead to body-wall fibrosis and calcification. As with superficial mutations, internal organ modifications vary greatly between individuals but usually include some of the following patterns:

- **Cardiomegaly:** Most Satyrs develop a relative hypervolemia to be able to distribute glucose and oxygen to their new tissues. To effectively pump blood to their ever-growing bodies, these mutants develop various degrees of cardiomegaly. Some have even been found with two or more hearts to sustain their massive bodies.

- **Glandular hyperplasia:** The creatures' glands are often hyperactive and grow up to twice their normal size. However, contrary to popular belief, massive glandular tumors are not usually active and instead lead to endocrine inactivity. Commonly affected glands include thyroid, pituitary, and adrenal glands. Interestingly enough, a large number of Satyrs have also been found to develop a large eye-like structure in place of their pineal gland.

- **Gastroenteric modifications:** Specific mutations in the creatures' digestive system seem to guide their feeding behavior. Creatures with larger guts and multiple gastric sacs (even gizzards) often become absolute omnivores, even feeding on non-organics, such as glass. In contrast, carnivorous mutants usually have shorter guts with powerful proteolytic enzymes.

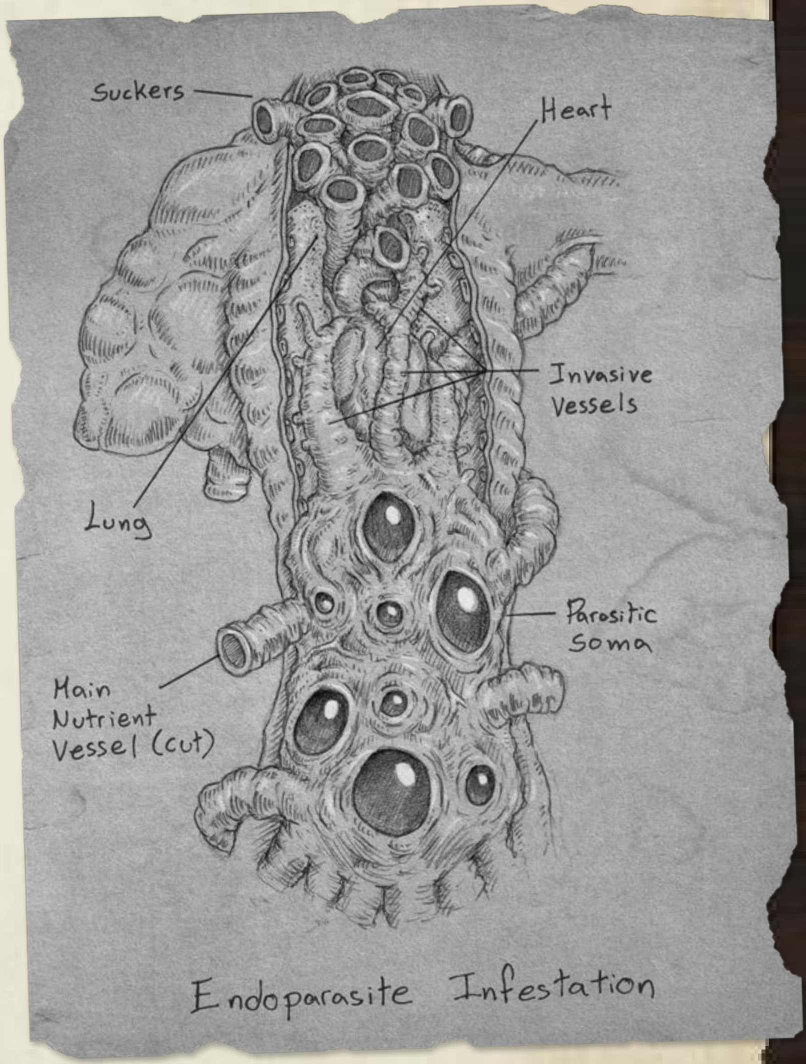
- **Aberrant organs:** It is not uncommon to find newly formed organs and functioning non-human tissue in Satyrs. Some finds include extrasensory organs (stimulated by electromagnetism, dark matter, time fluctuations, etc.), hemolymph-producing colonies, silicon-based organs, and venom glands.

Biology & Ecology:

Mutant Satyrs are the result of humanoid exposure to extradimensional radiation. While most animals have genetic repair mechanisms to fight mutations caused by regular ionizing radiation, other forms of energy seem to act in ways that bypass our evolved defenses. Common sources of exposure to this type of energy include interdimensional gates and interaction with multidimensional or transdimensional beings. Because these beings use metabolic pathways inconceivable to three-dimensional creatures, they frequently radiate massive amounts of energy. This energy is theorized to work in different ways, including manipulation of antimatter, dark energy, dark matter, and other less known phenomena. These abnormal interactions with universal forces result in the warping and twisting of living flesh exposed to this energy.

While most mutations are accidental, some Satyrs are the result of controlled exposure and guided alterations meant to develop specific features. Examples of these mutations come from cults that worship complex beings and seek additional limbs or vocal organs to properly perform their rituals. In a similar manner, scientists and explorers may also look to guided mutations to grow new sensory organs or enhanced brain adaptations. Finally, Machiavellian minds may use Satyrs as experimental subjects, soldiers, or food for interdimensional creatures.

As with shape and physiology, metabolic requirements vary from mutant to mutant. Some Satyrs are extremely volatile and require an immense amount of calories and protein per day to survive. These creatures tend to be violent and may even double their size in a matter of a few days. However, as a result of their high metabolic activity, they are prone to mechanical waste and relatively short life spans. Other Satyrs have slower metabolic rates and have been known to survive decades without food. While still dangerous, these types of mutants are much slower to grow and can often outlive humans.



Endoparasite Infestation

Development:

Since they are not a real species, Mutant Satyrs develop in many distinct ways. As variable as they are, observation of human-born samples has shed light on two main mutation pathways:

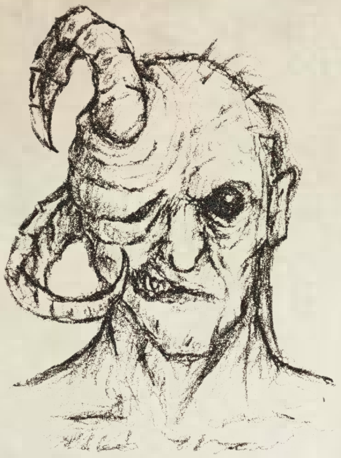
1. **Tissue metaplasia:** It seems that exposure to extradimensional energy is more damaging to differentiated cells than it is for stem cells. This means that, when exposed

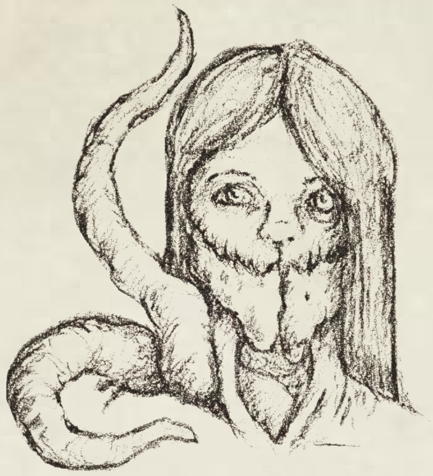
to an adequate energy source, most of the subject's preexisting tissue will gradually suffer intense burns and necrosis. Genetic mutations gradually accumulate on stem-cell colonies as they begin new, rapid mitotic cycles to replace the old tissue with new, genetically modified cells that are more resistant to damage. Since these mutations are, themselves, abnormal and mechanically damaging, they act as triggers for further mutation, creating a never-ending cycle.

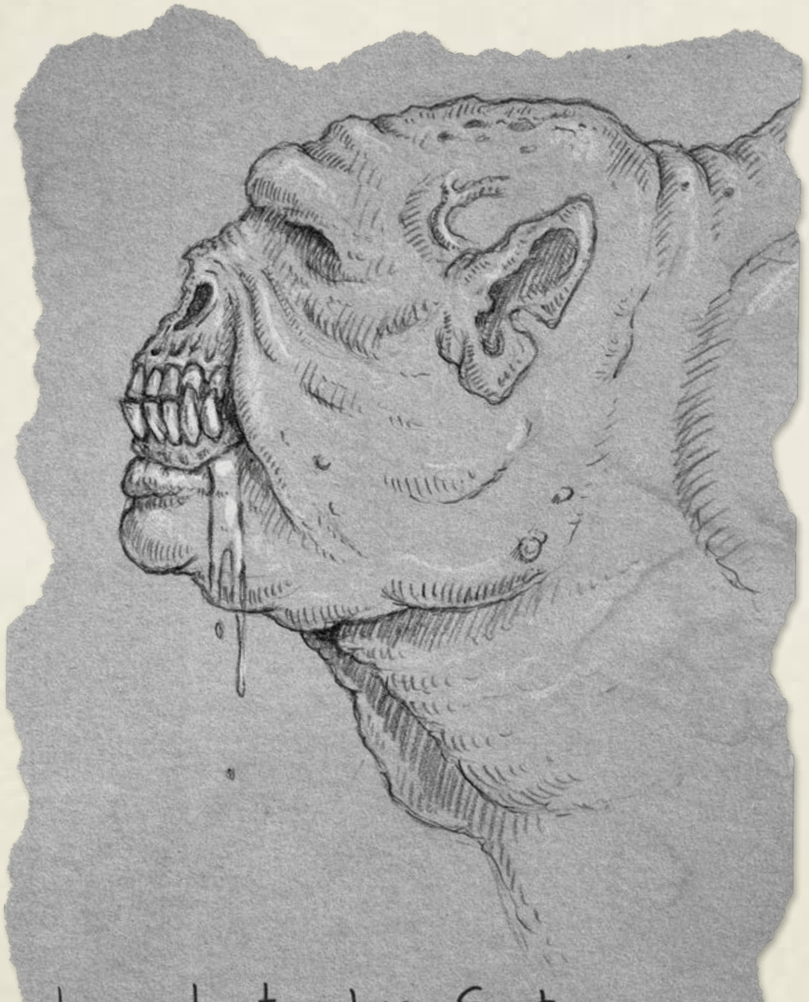
2. **Parasitic organisms:** In some subjects, mutations seem to be caused by parasitic infestation brought forth by interdimensional creatures. Whether intentional or accidental, exposure to all sorts of interdimensional eggs or spores can result in a parasite-dependent Satyr. Common carriers of these types of vectors include Byakhee, Dark Young and Flying Polyps.

Mutant Satyrs' behavior is often the result of either a premature psychotic break or neurologic disorders. Disconnection with our reality is frequently associated with the creatures' extreme pain and its exposure to new sensations. As mutations continue to develop, neuronal damage and cortical warping usually result in irreversible behavioral changes.

While Mutant Satyrs are often characterized as being variable and presenting inconsistent malformations, some known organisms have been proposed as "stable" Satyrs that have speciated over time. These mysterious creatures are believed to have been humanoids that settled near known sources of extradimensional energy but, for some reason, slowly developed stable mutations that persisted over generations. These creatures include the Arctic Gnoph-Keh and the Leng Folk, both of which present bizarre traits that do not really fit any evolutionary lineage.







Lipodystrophic Satyr

Explorer's Note:

Killing a Satyr is probably in the best interest of both of you.

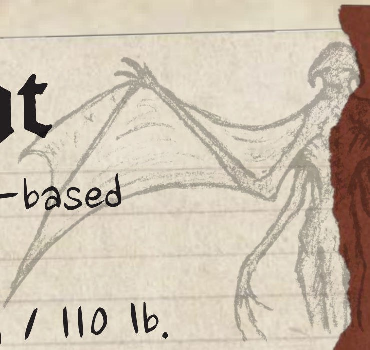
Nightgaunt

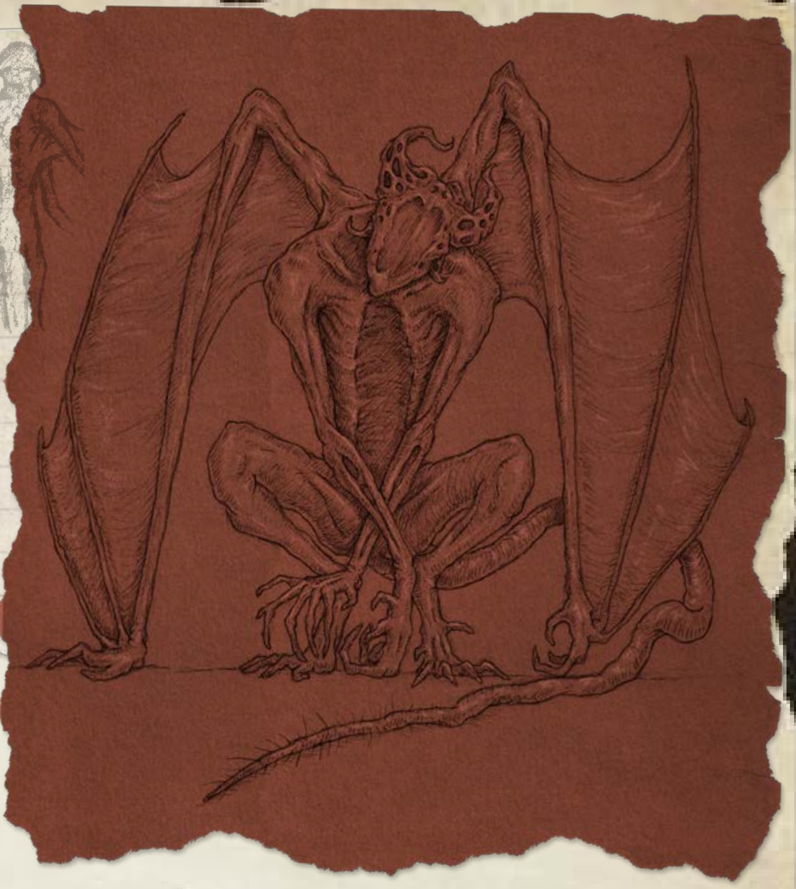
Nature: Matter-based dream stalkers

Weight: ~ 50 kg / 110 lb.

Height: ~ 2 m / 6.5 ft.

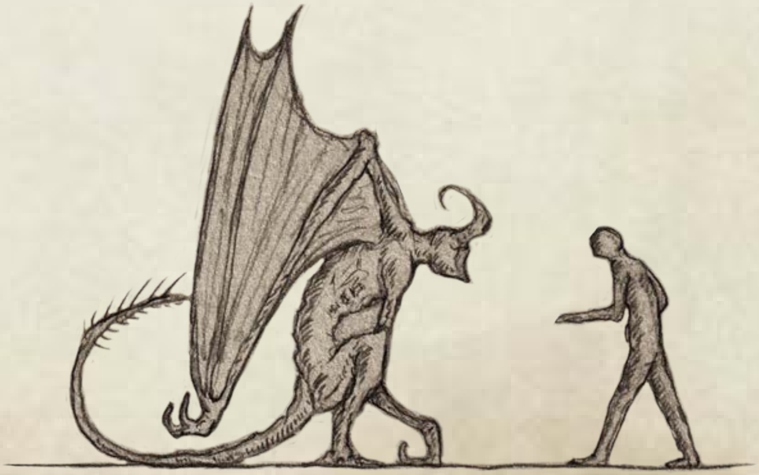
Habitat: Dreamlands' highest mountain peaks and sacred temples





Nightgaunts are mysterious creatures often found as antagonists in folk stories and myths that warn of the dangers of ancient mountains. They resemble extremely elongated and emaciated humanoids with massive membranous wings and long, barbed tails. Their most disturbing characteristic is their horned head, which lacks facial features. While their appearance is usually enough to scare explorers, their wings and limbs are strong enough to abduct intruders and carry them towards an impending doom.

These mysterious creatures live in reclusion inside high mountain caverns. They are usually found in large numbers and tend to flock en masse when they sense intruders nearby.



Nightgaunts seldom hurt their prey directly, but they are known to carry their catch to the Dreamlands' underground, where they drop it off to be feasted upon by other horrors. While their motivations remain a mystery, they seem to be intelligent creatures that can be bargained with, if given the chance.

Anatomical Features:

Nightgaunts have an overall humanoid morphotype with the addition of a long tail and a pair of membranous wings. Their structure is very elongated and slender, giving the impression of "gauntness". Muscular development is only evident near joints, specifically near the base of the wings. Regardless, their body is incredibly resistant and tough.

They are commonly referred to as "faceless" because of their lack of eyes, ears, nose, and mouth. Two curved horns grow out of their frontal bones and develop unique patterns that vary between individuals (similar to a human's fingerprint or a zebra's stripe pattern).

A Nightgaunt's arms, feet, and wings all feature long fingers and toes that vary in number and shape. While their distribution appears to be random, supernumerary digits help the creature grasp its prey, explore it (see below), and carry it wherever it needs.

A long and flexible tail emerges from the Nightgaunt's sacral region. It is usually longer than the creature's body and is covered in rougher skin. Starting at about halfway of its total length, long and pointy quills grow all around it, becoming longer as they reach the tip. While they are certainly irritating, these are not meant for defense e.g., like a thagomizer and instead seem to function as mechanoreceptors (similar to whiskers in mammals).

Generally pictured as completely black in folk tales, Nightgaunts are actually somewhat iridescent. Their skin is textured in a manner similar to waking-world cuttlefish and squids. Depending on the situation, wild Nightgaunts have been spotted changing their skin color to various shades of blue, purple, and black in order to blend in with their surroundings. Some of the more poetic oneirobiologists have described Nightgaunt skin as "bearing the color of the night, with all its stars and galaxies reflected with cosmic precision".

Dissection of a Nightgaunt reveals that their overall skeletal system is similar to that of modern humans. Notable and unique structural variations include the scapular-alar joints (that connect the pectoral girdle with the wings), supernumerary phalanges, and a rather peculiar skull. While parietal, temporal, and occipital bones are very human-like, Nightgaunts lack all facial bones except for the lower maxillary bone, which is fused and incomplete. Frontal bones are also similar to humans but feature bony growths to support both keratin horns.

Internal organs are similar in structure and number to those of hominins, but they are notably atrophied and, for the most part, vestigial (most look mummified even in fresh specimens). No dissection has ever found evidence of any form of sexual organ, vestigial or not. It would seem that a Nightgaunt's only functional internal tissues are those that make up its central and peripheral nervous systems, which are very well developed and occupy most of the creature's internal body chambers.

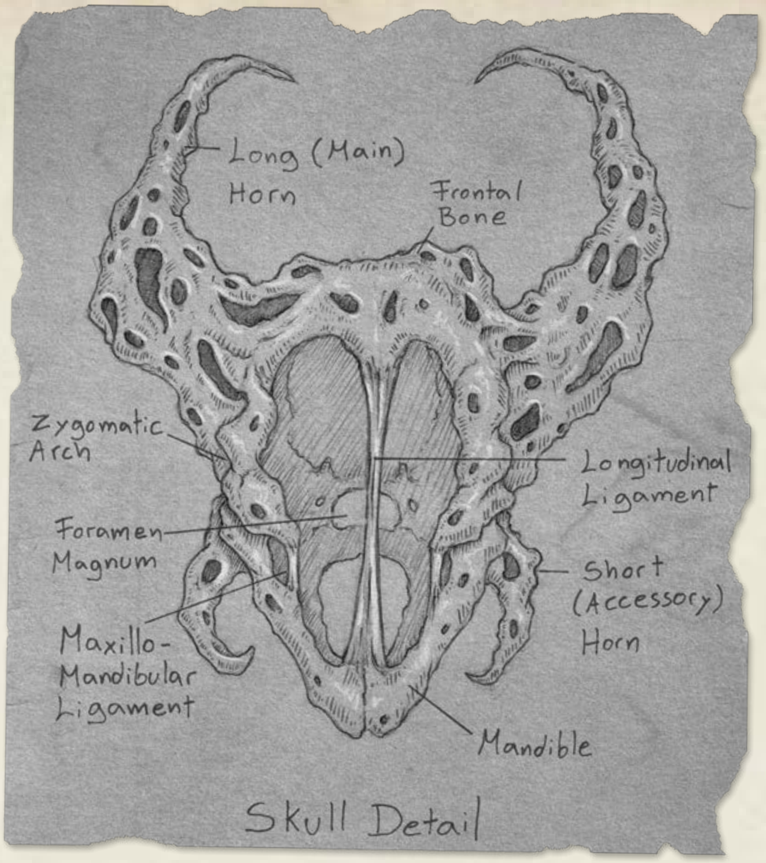
Biology & Ecology:

Nightgaunt physiology is still very poorly understood by oneirobiologists, who often have a hard time discerning fact from myth and legend. For instance, they are not known to feed in any way, so they seem to obtain energy directly from the environment through passive means. While this is usually taken as fact, common folklore also suggests they feed on fear, something that has not been proven with evidence.

Besides their overall structure, their biological function is completely alien to waking-world creatures. Their cardiovascular, digestive, and pulmonary systems are completely rudimentary and atrophied, showing no evidence of having been functional at any point during the creature's lifespan. In place of these, the Nightgaunt's thoracic and abdominal chambers are filled with small brain-like nodules and cords.

Electrophysiological studies have shown slow-moving, synchronized electrical waves that travel throughout the whole creature as if it were a human brain. The fact that these patterns closely resemble delta waves of human deep sleep cycles has led to the suggestion that Nightgaunts are perpetual sleepwalkers.

These creatures can normally be found living in high altitude caverns or inside underground lairs. They seem to congregate near ancient sites of worship, like mount Ngranek, where they crouch in silence until they are bothered. No real evidence of nests, eggs, or younglings has been recorded inside these caves. How they maintain their stable population remains a mystery.



While these creatures lack any form of known language, it would seem that they understand abstract concepts and possess some degree of cognition. Evidence of this mainly comes from their good relationship with Ghouls, who communicate with them with growls and barks. Their behavior has also led to the belief that they can commune with other transdimensional beings through some nonverbal language. Whether or not they have alliances with these beings is unknown, but folklore usually aligns them with Nodens, the lord of the abyss.

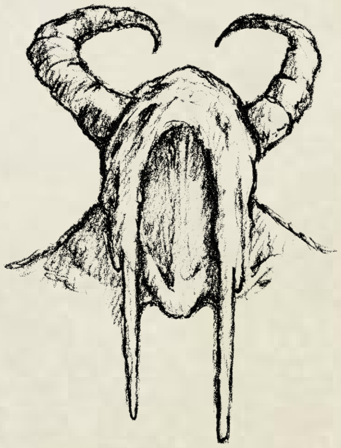
Their wings are powerful enough to carry themselves and their prey through the air, but their ability to fly at supersonic speed is yet to be explained. A favored theory among explorers proposes that Nightgaunts can open small wormholes by creating temporary folds in non-Euclidean space. While their motivations are still beyond our understanding, they often use this ability to take their abducted prey to the Dreamlands' underground, where their catch is delivered and left to die at the hands of Ghasts, Bholes and other underground dwellers.

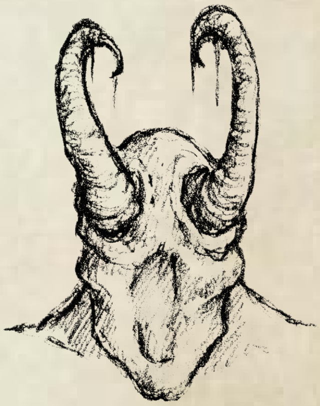
Development:

There is no known information of how Nightgaunts breed. Their lack of reproductive organs suggests that they are interdimensional and travel to the Dreamlands from another plane. While this claim appears logical, it is yet to be sustained by actual evidence.

All studied specimens have unique characteristics that help with their identification. These include the number of digits, growth patterns on their horns, and individual features of their skin. Some skin features like membranes and flaps can also help identify certain populations.

There is some empirical evidence that suggests that Nightgaunts are not affected by the passing of time. The fact that no senescent specimens have ever been recorded is often explained by one of two main hypotheses; they either never grow old or they participate in social geronticide.





Explorer's Note:

Nightgaunts are said to instinctively tickle their prey with their multiple digits and quilled tails as they soar through the skies. Since they are known to be curious creatures, it is now believed that this is how they "see" what they are holding.

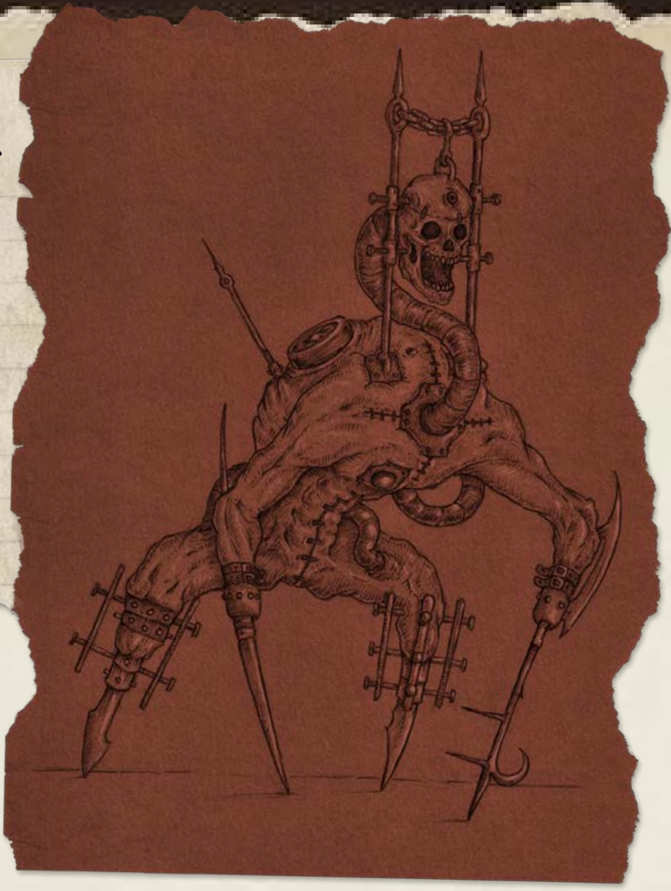
Reanimated of K'n-yan

Nature: Matter-based animated corpse

Weight: 60 – 1100 kg / 130 – 2400 lb.

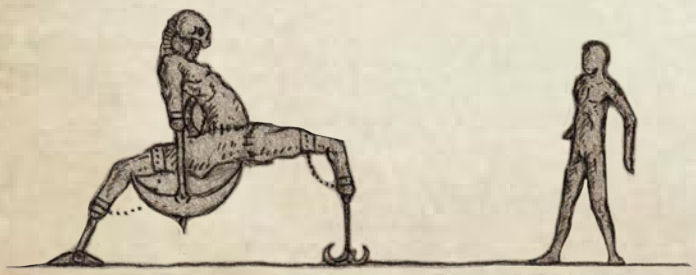
Height: 1 – 3 m / 3 – 9 ft.

Habitat: Blue-lit underground of K'n-yan



The reanimated corpses of K'n-yan are the creations of a technologically advanced, yet morally twisted, underground civilization. This culture of beings is commonly referred to as the "Ancients". The Ancients were scientifically-advanced prehistoric human relatives who, among other feats of technical superiority, developed the ability to use nuclear fusion reactors and electrochemical stimulation to reanimate dead bodies for use as guards, servants, and entertainment. The reanimated's appearance is as variable as their creator's imagination allows it, but they always feature a mix between multiple stitched body parts and mechanical enhancements.

While horrifying to behold, these organic servants are extremely useful to the near-immortal Ancients of K'n-yan. The reanimated are commonly produced to be used as soldiers but they can also be the work of gruesome artists and performers who seek new ways to heighten their sensations. Whatever the reanimated's use, the mindless roaming of these mechanically enhanced carcasses inside the blue-lit underworld known as K'n-yan serves as a reminder that outsiders better beware.



Anatomical Features:

The reanimated have different features depending on their creator's desired functionality. Because of their manufactured nature, and the fact that they are as much machine as they are organic (cyborgs), finding general anatomical patterns to describe them becomes challenging. As a general rule, the Reanimated are composed of embalmed bodies with mechanical enhancements. These enhancements are technologically advanced and made of different metal alloys, with some preference for steel and gold, the latter of which is very common in K'n-yan. Higher-end corpses can feature magnetite adornments.

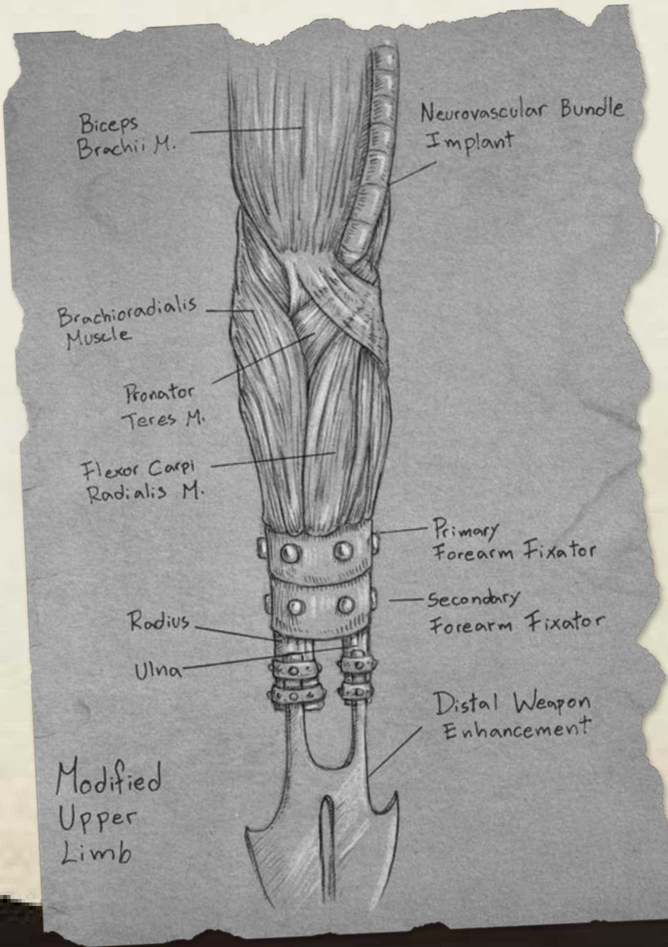
Some of the most common enhancements include:

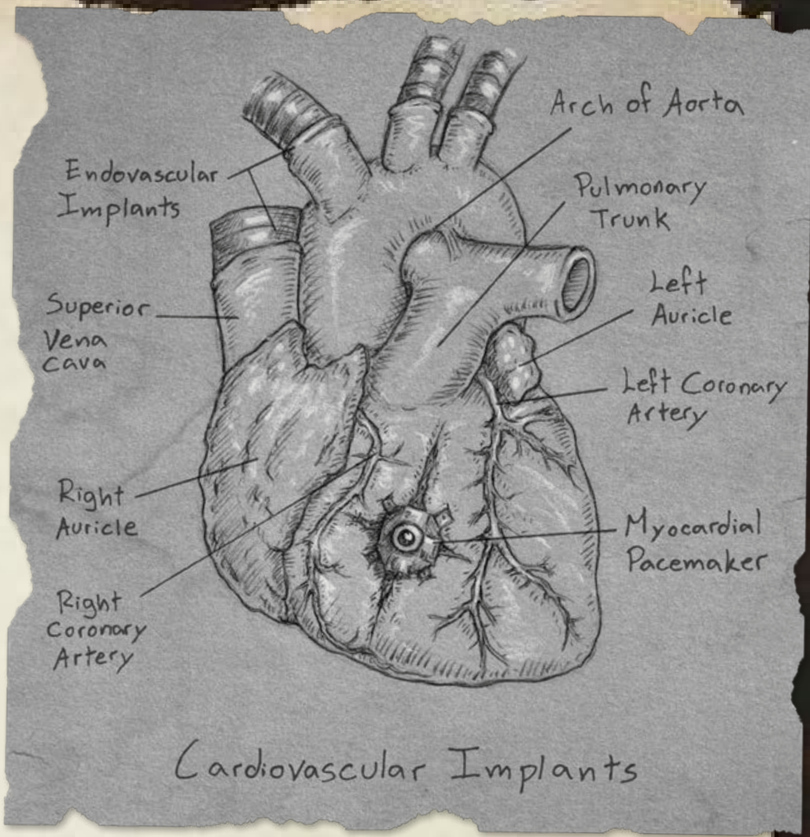
- **Energy source:** Since the reanimated don't feed, they obtain energy through a nuclear reactor that is normally implanted in the back or front of the thorax. While all Reanimated need this core to function properly, it can be hidden away for aesthetic or functional purposes.

- **Limb enhancements:** Prolongations of existing limbs or completely new mechanical appendages help with the corpse's desired function (e.g., climbing, hand-to-hand combat, drilling, etc.). Because of their predilection for flesh, Ancients rarely use fully mechanized limbs.

- **Stabilizing orthoses:** Some corpses are incomplete or have been so extensively modified that their structural integrity is compromised. For these cases, the Ancients have developed methods to stabilize their creations by using clamps, immobilizers, metal plates, rods, and other similar adaptations.

- **Weaponry:** Reanimated corpses that are meant to be used as guards, soldiers, or gladiators are typically enhanced with a variety of weapons. Physical weapons like blades, saws, and maces as well as ranged armaments such as railguns and solid-state lasers may be part of the cyborg's enhancements. The Ancients are not known to use gunpowder or fossil fuels to power their weaponry.


Biceps Brachii M.
Neurovascular Bundle Implant
Brachioradialis Muscle
Pronator Teres M.
Flexor Carpi Radialis M.
Primary Forearm Fixator
Secondary Forearm Fixator
Radius
Ulna
Distal Weapon Enhancement
Modified Upper Limb


Endovascular Implants
Arch of Aorta
Pulmonary Trunk
Left Auricle
Superior Vena Cava
Left Coronary Artery
Right Auricle
Myocardial Pacemaker
Right Coronary Artery
Cardiovascular Implants

Biology & Ecology:

Reanimated corpses are entirely dependent on their energy source to maintain their functions. A corpse's nuclear reactor distributes energy directly to its tissues and, via varying connections, to its mechanical components. To sustain some of their homeostatic requirements, isotonic fluids are pumped through mechanical or organic vessels. While an artificial circulatory system is easier and cheaper to produce, some reanimators prefer the challenge of directly stimulating the corpse's heart and vessels. They do this via an electric pacemaker that is implanted directly into the myocardium and polymer-based prostheses used to replace major arteries.

The corpse's brainstem and mesencephalon must be preserved to allow a degree of autonomic behavior. If the corpse's cranium is discarded for any reason (practical or aesthetic) the reanimator will usually hide the encephalon inside the body's pharynx or behind its mediastinum. If no encephalic tissue is preserved, the creature's behavior will be based on basal reflexes mediated by its spine.

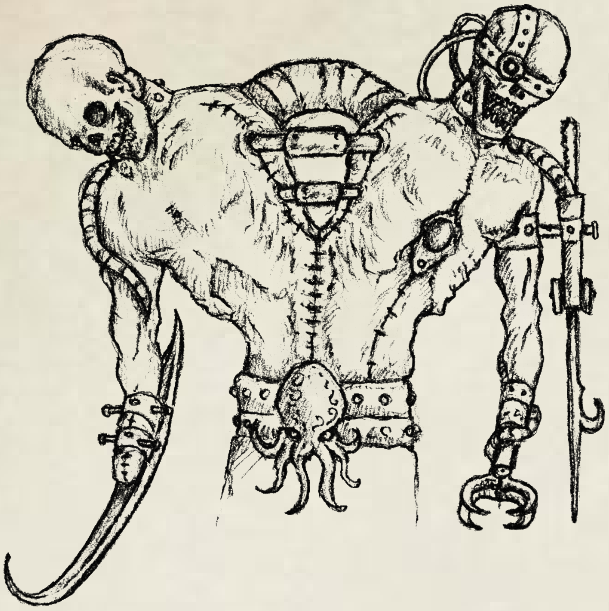
While easy to control, these brainless corpses show no initiative and must be managed externally. Preservation of the neocortex and limbic systems are not a priority, as they seem to interfere with basic command prompts and cause unpredictable behavior. While this behavior can be superficially reminiscent of delirium, these subjects show no evidence of formal cognition or language.

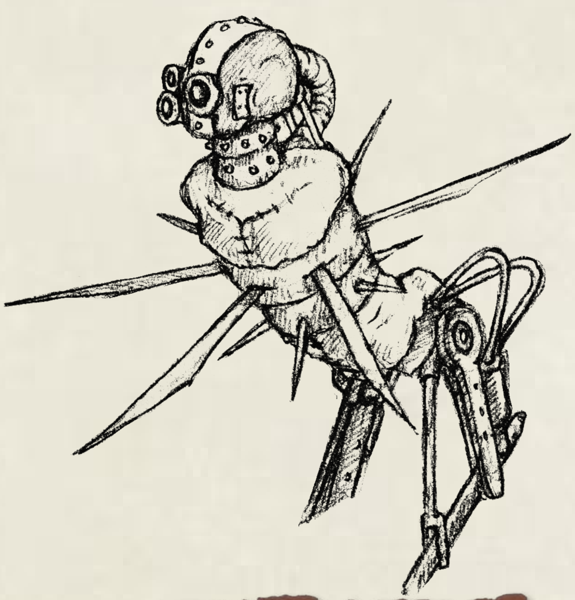
Development:

Reanimating a corpse is a delicate process even for the masterful Ancients of K'n-yan. First, corpses in varying stages of decomposition must go through an embalming procedure that seeks to preserve both tissue structure and function. After the tissue has been processed and is physiologically apt, the reanimator must proceed to implant the energy source and set up the circulatory pump. The circulating solution is prepared by mixing an isotonic, electrolyte-rich fluid with a bacteriostatic solution derived from K'n-yan's fluorescent fungi.

Once the energy and circulatory systems are set up, the reanimator must choose one of two possible methods of circulation. The first method requires a direct connection from the pump to the aorta, which is then used to distribute the solution to the rest of the body. If the body's main arteries prove to be unusable, the reanimator must use an alternative method that depends on artificial vessels and membranes. Needless to say, reanimated corpses work best if the raw materials are fresh. Rotting corpses are almost never used, since tissue necrosis makes grafting very difficult.

Eventually, the internal isotonic fluids of all reanimated will become contaminated with waste material, progressively changing their color from a light, fluorescent turquoise to a dark red or ochre. This is caused by an accumulation of decaying myoglobin and ammonia resulting from the corpse's function. When in this stage, the reanimated will no longer be reliable and are discarded, leaving them to roam in designated depots or junk fields until they are barely able to move and eventually cease their function.





Explorer's Note:

The Ancients are draconic in their punishments and will not pass a chance to spread their warnings across the land. The decapitated and limbless body of a Spanish conquistador that roams one of the entrances to K'n-yan is but one of many examples of this.

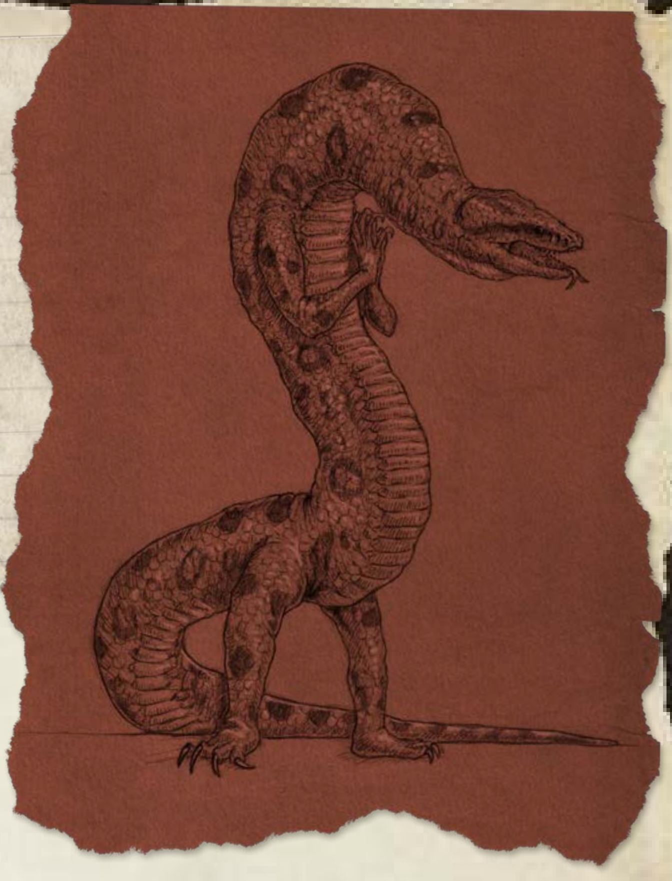
Serpent Folk

Nature: Matter-based lepidosaurian humanoids

Weight: ~ 90 kg / 200 lb.

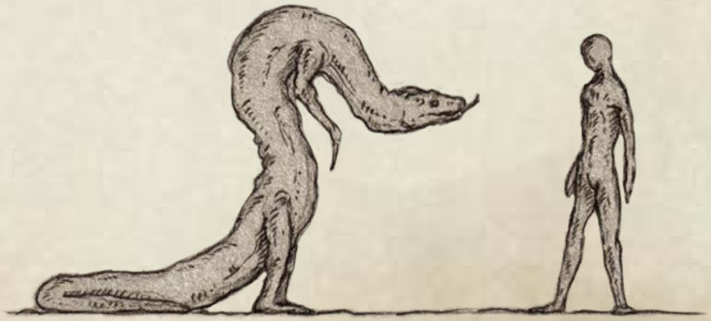
Height: ~ 1.8 m / 6 ft.

Habitat: Earth's jungles and underground tunnels



Serpent Folk are an interesting strain of ancient humanoid reptiles that reached the height of their power before the appearance of primates. They resemble limbed hominids with elongated necks, a serpentine face, and a long tail. While they may appear and act in a way similar to humans, their cognitive and emotional functions are fundamentally different. Due to their intelligence and mystic inclinations, Serpent Folk are usually the protagonists of human paranoia.

While their civilization seems to have flourished around the Permian period, they quickly lost their dominion as more advanced civilizations rose to power during the Mesozoic Era. Present-day Serpent Folk can still be found in isolated regions of the Americas, where they live in tropical areas or underground tunnels. Younger populations are usually more primal and dangerous than their ancestors due to isolation and inbreeding.



Anatomical Features:

Serpent Folk are usually described as having a general humanoid structure with reptilian characteristics. Their head is very snake-like but varies greatly depending on the individual's subspecies. Their long neck, torso and abdomen are connected to a pair of forelimbs and hindlimbs similar in structure to those of squamous lizards. Because of their hunched posture, Serpent Folk rarely appear taller than a modern human.

The creatures' skull is very similar to that of ancient pythons but feature larger braincases. Their upper and lower jaws are movable and articulate in a way that allows Serpent Folk to eat large prey whole. While not common in more ancestral populations, some newer clans have acquired a number of morphofunctional traits common to modern elapid snakes, like venom glands and skin hoods.

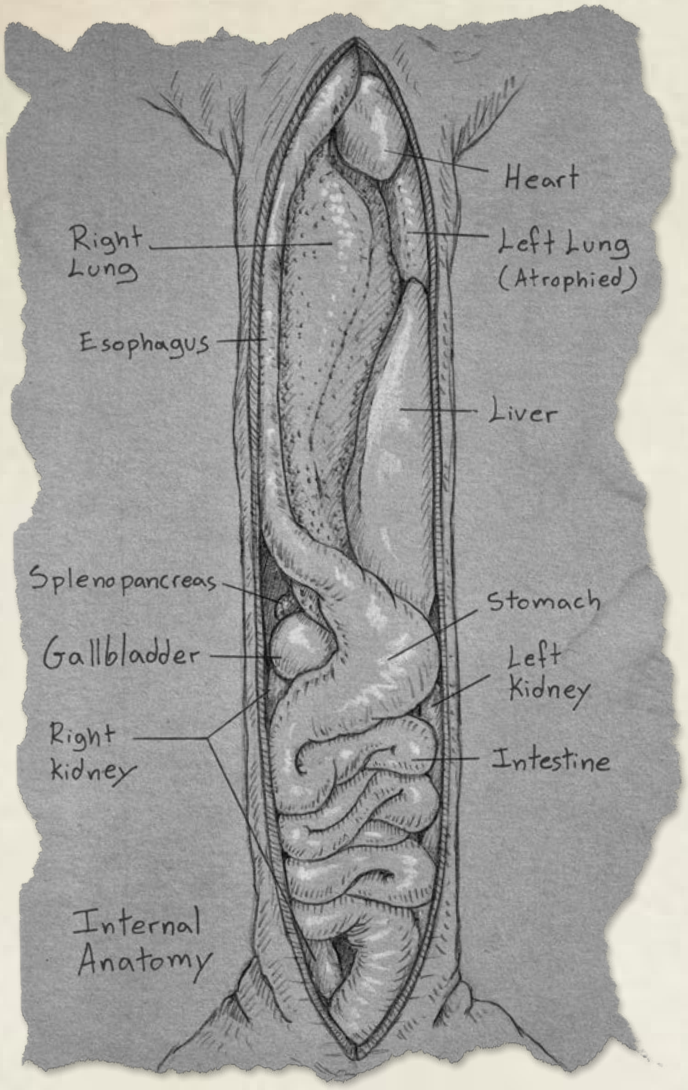
Their limbs are extremely long by reptilian standards and are similar in proportion to those of humans (hindlimbs being longer than forelimbs). They have opposable thumbs and their digits end in claws instead of nails. Depending on the subspecies, their limbs may also feature interdigital membranes and osteoderms.

Dissection of these creatures is fairly straightforward since their internal organs are virtually indistinguishable from those of modern snakes, albeit with some evolutionary adaptations. The liver, heart, and esophagus occupy the ventral portion of the thorax while the lungs occupy the dorsal portion (like snakes, only the right lung is fully functional in Serpent Folk). Their stomach, intestine, kidneys, and reproductive organs occupy the whole abdominal chamber. It is important to remember that Serpent Folk lack a diaphragm muscle, so the distinction between thoracic and abdominal chambers is mainly functional.

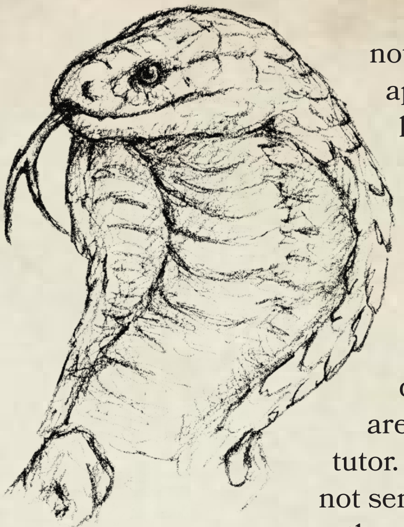
Biology & Ecology:

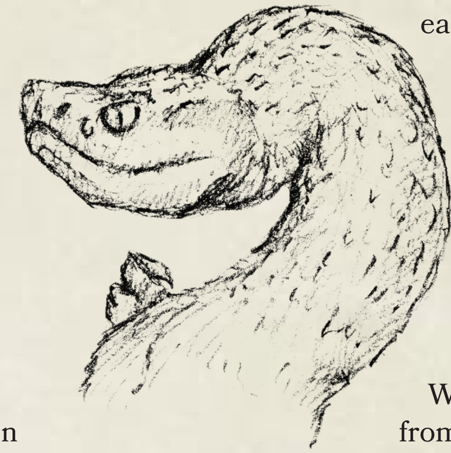
Serpent Folk phylogeny is still a matter of debate. Their long, strong limbs suggest that they initially adapted to life in trees but later transitioned to land to free their arms as they began to use tools. Cumulative genetic mutations are thought to have caused them to develop an exponential growth of cortical neurons, which eventually led to the acquisition of language and cognition, suggesting a convergent evolutionary pathway with modern-day hominids. This process is believed to have taken place shortly after the beginning of the Permian period, which implies that Serpent Folk were evolved from some of the first diapsid reptiles. If this is true, then these creatures could share a common ancestor with all lepidosauromorphs, a clade that includes lizards and snakes.

Serpent Folk are highly intelligent and are known to have all cognitive functions of modern humans. However, because of their fundamental evolutionary differences, their culture has unique values that differ from those of primate-derived societies, especially when it comes to empathy and emotional responses. Primates generally see them as cold and emotionless creatures.



Scriptures and archaeological evidence suggest that Serpent Folk reached the height of their civilization during the latter part of the Paleozoic era but quickly decayed during the Mesozoic. Though advanced, their technology was unable to match the assaults coming from Yithians, Elder Things, and Starspawn that fought for control of the planet. As a result, most surviving Serpent Folk concentrated their colonies around what is now Central America in an attempt to hide from the raging conflict. Because of their isolation, most of their technological advances were forgotten and inbreeding led to an increased prevalence of genetic mutations. By the end of the Mesozoic era, the Cretaceous-Paleogene (K-PG) extinction





event marked a death sentence to the once-flourishing civilization, which drove the remaining species underground in order to survive the changing atmospheric temperatures and the eventual rise of mammalian competitors.

Modern Serpent Folk prefer underground habitats in which they build large cities with tunnels that connect them to rainforests across the Americas. Their temples to ancient serpent deities like Yig are thought to be the main inspiration for Aztec and Mayan folklore. Remains of similar temples have been reported in underground N'kai, where Yothan archosaurs were crossed with Ghasts to produce the Gyaa-yothn hybrids. However, whether these temples actually belonged to Serpent Folk remains a mystery.

Older members of the species often enjoy walking around the surface world to better understand mammalian behavior. They are keen observers and commonly develop theories that try to explain why mammals act so different to them. In present times, their interest seems to center around humans, which they secretly observe behind clever disguises. Rare encounters with these curious observers have led some communities to believe that Serpent Folk secretly control the rulers of the surface world.

Development:

Serpent Folk are born from egg nests built in moist underground caves filled with compost. Very young hatchlings can be confused with varanids and other lizards until their bodies elongate and the young begin their development of symbolic thinking.

As a result of their evolutionary heritage, Serpent Folk are rarely vocal, and would rather not speak, if possible. This also applies to younglings, who will often hiss and communicate nonverbally. In adults, as they mature, most of their verbal communication is either written or whispered. Serpent Folk societies lack the family values of mammals. Their younglings are raised by designated caretakers until they are old enough to be assigned to a tutor. Serpent tutors are usually old but not senescent and are responsible for the education of up to ten juveniles each. As they grow older, each individual will dedicate its life to a specific field, be it healing, arts, science, or philosophy. Because of their relative lack of empathy, young apprentices usually try to overshadow their peers and dominate them by any means necessary.

While Serpent Folk become fertile from a very young age, they are not encouraged to reproduce unless their environment can support their needs. Because of their longevity, unchecked reproduction can quickly lead to overpopulation and an inevitable trophic cascade. On the contrary, if a colony is in desperate need to repopulate, they can do so even without a mate (via a process called facultative parthenogenesis).

Explorer's Note:

Serpent Folk can usually be negotiated with in exchange of knowledge. While useful for some time, deals with these creatures only last until they can use their newly acquired insights in their favor.

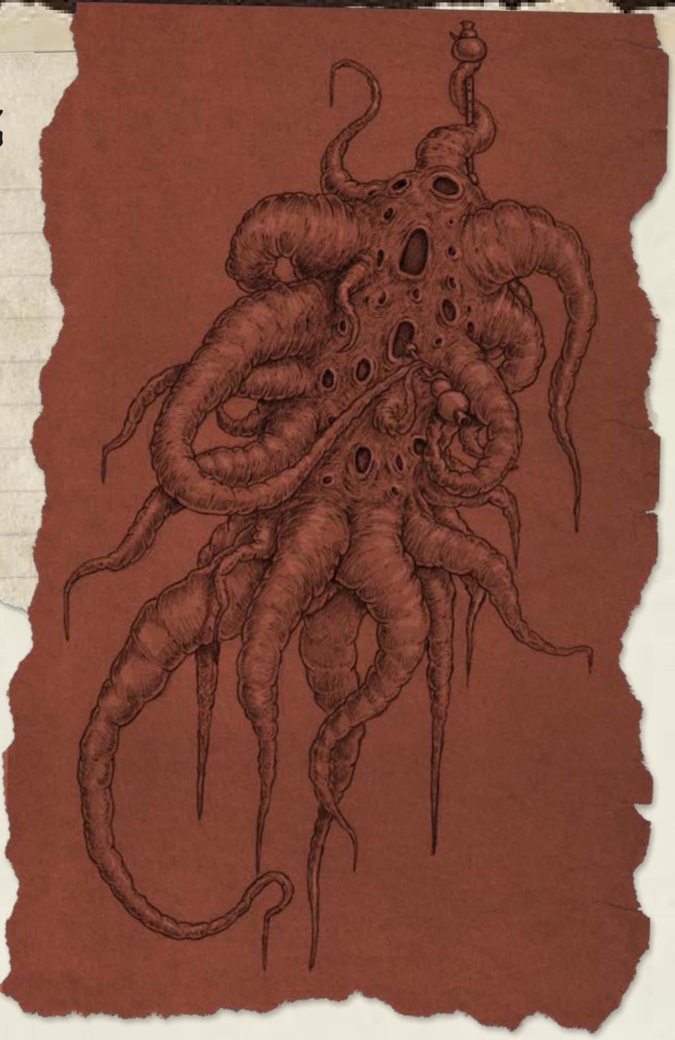
Servitor of the Outer Gods

Nature: Transdimensional amorphous flautist

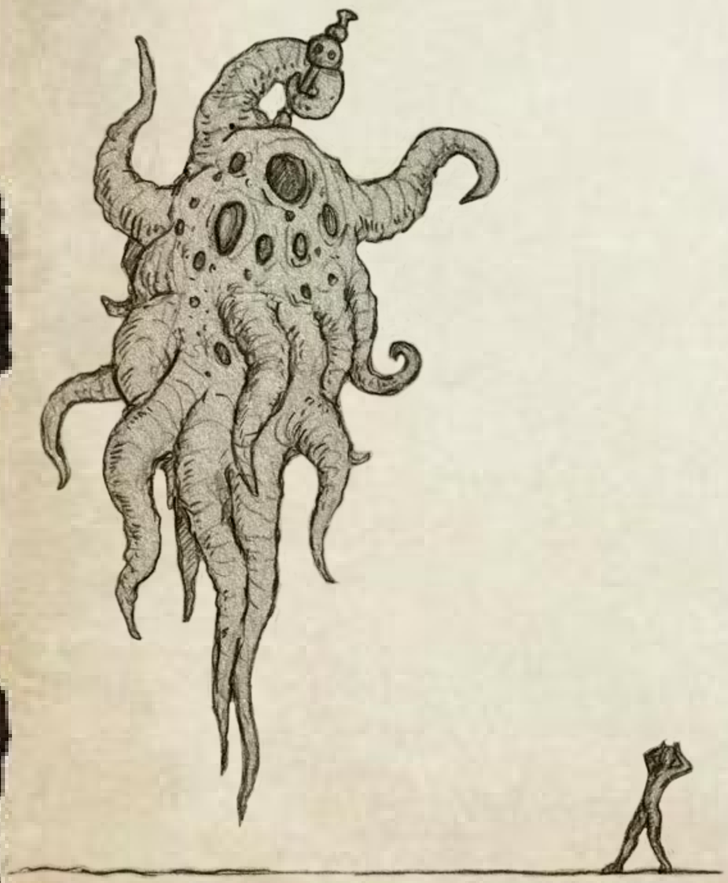
Weight: 60 – 1100 kg / 130 – 2400 lb.

Height: 1 – 3 m / 3 – 9 ft.

Habitat: The event horizon around the center of nuclear chaos



Servitors of the Outer Gods are a group of poorly understood creatures that inhabit a massive dimensional junction called the "nuclear chaos". They have variable shapes but mostly resemble massive cephalopods with dozens of openings on their main body. Their most distinguishing trait is their persistent playing of strange flute-like instruments in disharmonic rhythms.



It would seem that these creatures are able to control transdimensional energy waves with their flutes, which they play compulsively to alter reality. When needed, they can alter their melodies to resonate with different dimensions to open wormholes, counter energy sources, and connect material dimensions with the Dirac Sea. Ancient scripts that mention Servitors of the Outer Gods suggest that their incessant playing is meant to control the spread of Azathoth, a theorized primordial being made of pure entropic chaos.

Anatomical Features:

Servitors of the Outer Gods are known to come in all sizes, but often feature a very large and amorphous body covered with tentacular arms and apertures of varying size and shape. Their skin has a leathery texture but is usually covered in a thick slimy exudate. They have no identifiable sensory organs.

A servitor's arms are strong and muscular and resemble those of cephalopods, albeit lacking appendages like suckers or hooks. They have a variable length that allows them to perform different tasks at the same time. Shorter arms are comparable to a human limb while longer ones can double the creature's size.

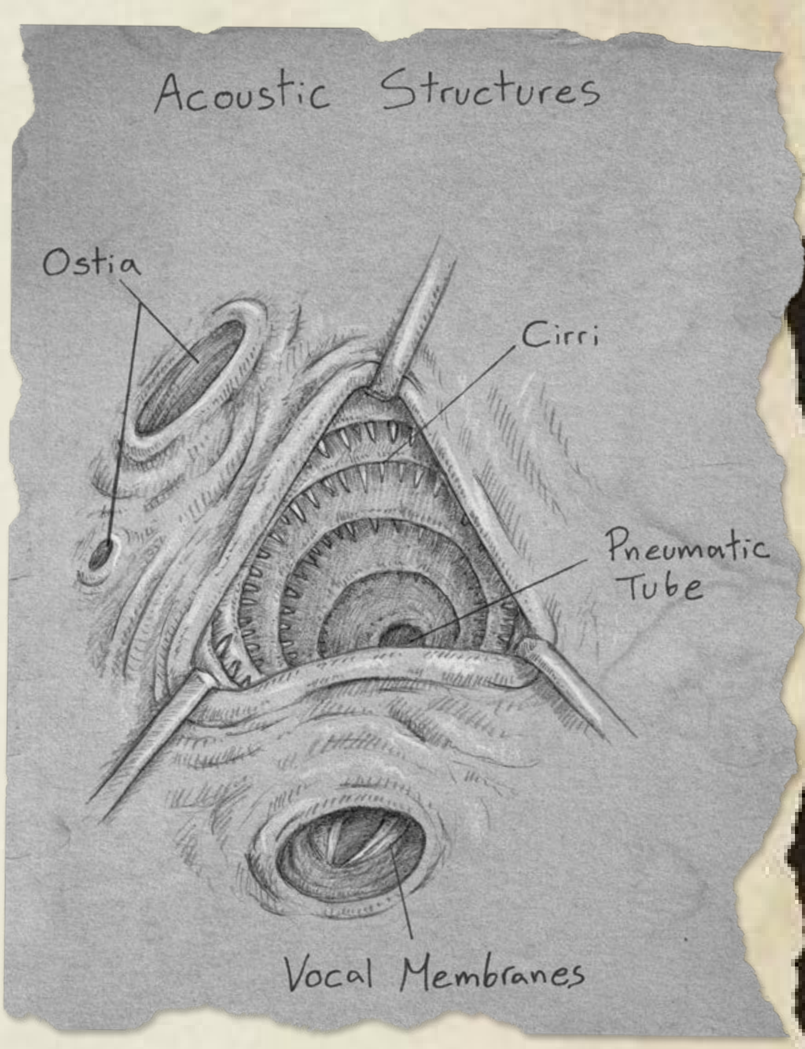
The apertures, or ostia, are found all around the Servitor's core and are adapted to produce different types of waves when playing its flute. While most are lean, some ostia can feature appendages such as teeth, cirri, or membranes, all of which seem meant to alter resonance.

So far, only one near-complete specimen has been successfully dissected before disintegrating completely. Its core contained what is believed to be the central nervous system, which is composed of hundreds of small neuronal ganglia. The rest of their core was filled with air sacks that connected between each other and their ostia. Dissection of an arm evidenced a central fibrous axis containing a nervous cord, four longitudinal muscles, and surrounding oblique muscles.

Biology & Ecology:

There is little detail on how Servitors' physiological processes work, as they are connected to dimensions that are alien to material creatures. The fact that they lack reproductive, digestive, or cardiovascular systems supports the theory that their physiology depends on transdimensional processes.

Servitors lack any form of brain cortex, instead having neuronal ganglia that receive waves from beyond known space and time. Empiric observations extrapolated from folkloric texts suggest these creatures are dependent on the slumber of higher—infinitely-dimensional—beings that exist transversally through realities (known as Outer Gods). Like remora fish, Servitors are thought to feed on energy emanating from these creatures. It has also been suggested that servitors' ability at generating and negating energy keeps the Outer Gods "asleep". Should servitors stop playing, their mindless masters could expand to consume the universe, and all universes, until they consume themselves.

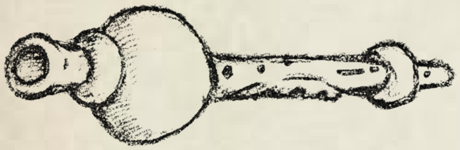


Other than the flute-like instruments they play compulsively, servitors are not known to use tools. These "flutes" are theorized to affect our reality by synchronizing to different wavelengths belonging to different dimensions. Their vibrations appear to have near-infinite effects, such as summoning the Dirac Sea, connecting dimensions through wormholes, and negating existing energy sources. As dangerous as Servitors of the Outer Gods are by themselves, their manipulation of space and time also attracts other transdimensional creatures like Flying Polyps, Hunting Horrors, Hounds of Tindalos, and worse.

While there is little information on their ecology and habitat, empirical observations have evidenced that the closer one gets to the center of nuclear chaos, the more Servitors are to be found. Near the event horizon, where all dimensions merge, millions of individuals swarm around the massive junction playing their maddening tunes. Interestingly, as one gets closer to the junction, sounds of incessant drumming progressively compliment the fluting. It is possible that a larger strain of Servitors may inhabit these regions, using large percussive objects to produce energy spikes on a massive scale.

Development:

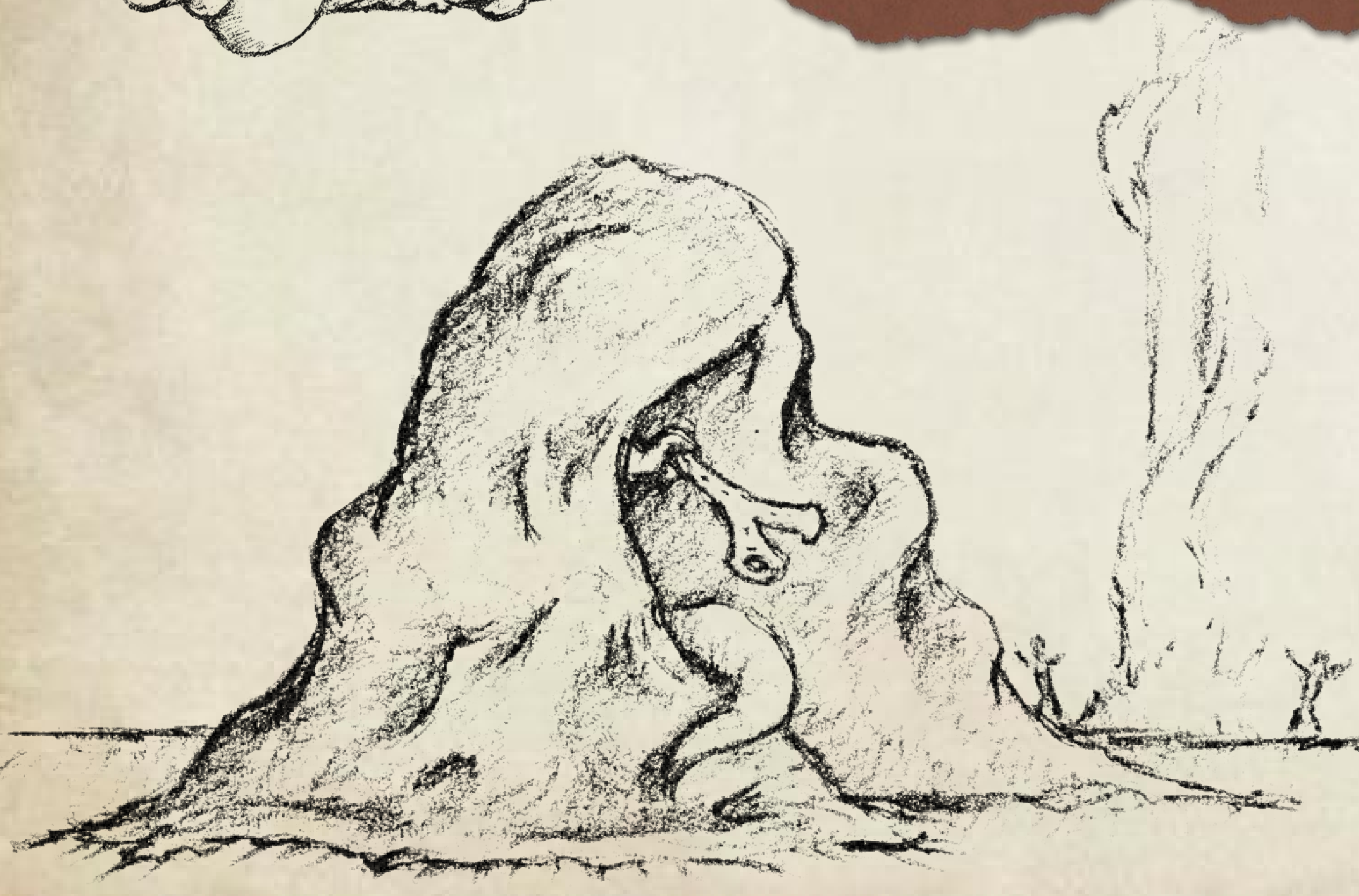
There is no known information on how servitors develop. Ancient texts indicate they are conceived near the center of nuclear chaos, in the only place where all realities and dimensions coalesce. Whether they are able to reproduce or are physical manifestations of a single being is also unknown. While still apocryphal, the following excerpt can help guide the effort to understand these creatures:



"...lies Azathoth. This is where place and being are the same, where perpetual [entropic] chaos is ever growing, where Outer Gods were conceived and gave rise to all realities... and there, in the horizon of the true singularity, their servitors swarm and synchronize their melodies to prevent the expansion of their all-consuming blind, idiot god..."

Explorer's Note:

Servitors can sometimes be called upon to aid cults in the summoning of transdimensional beings. If one recognizes their maddening flutes and amorphous shapes, it's wisest to flee before other, far more dangerous entities arrive.



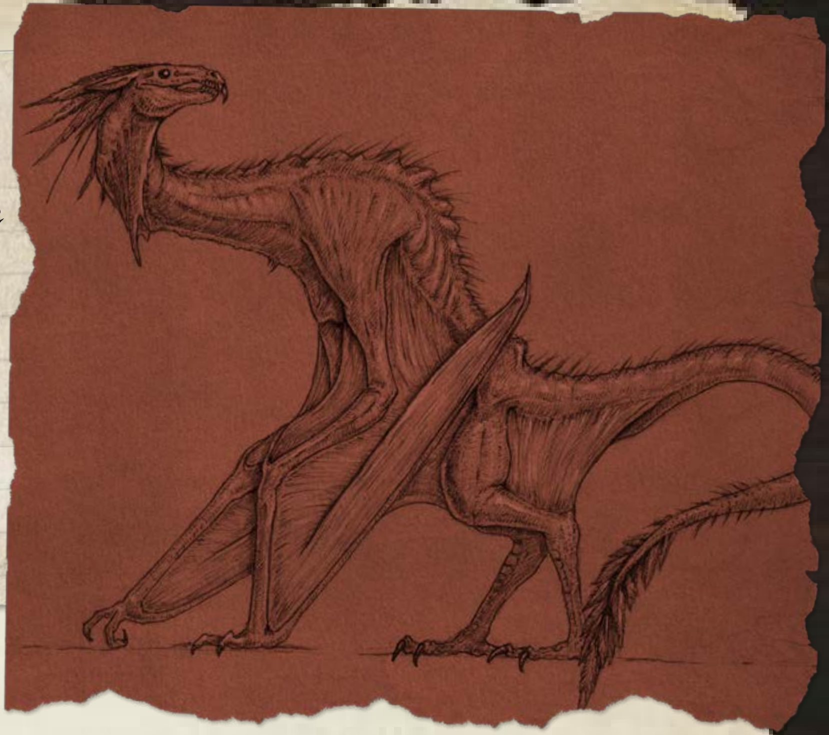
Shantak

Nature: Matter-based nightmare (Dreamworld) mount

Weight: ~ 2000 kg / 4400 lb.

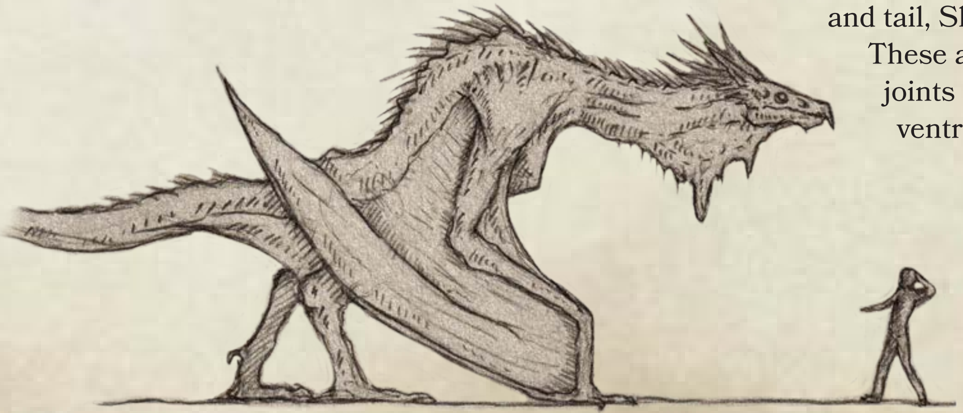
Height: ~ 4 m / 13 ft.

Habitat: Rocky cliffs on the Dreamlands' surface world



Shantak birds are the only extant members of a larger Dreamworld theropod clade. They loosely resemble large wyverns with an equine face, membranous wings, and scaly skin. While these creatures are generally shunned because of their appearance, they are also feared due to their viciousness and cruelty when hunting. Because of this, Shantak herding is a very rare and dangerous practice. When (and if) successfully tamed, these animals can become useful mounts.

Shantaks are ubiquitous on the northern Dreamland mountain ranges, especially beyond Inganok and to the northeast, around the plateau of Leng. They are carnivorous and hunt large prey or scavenge remains, if needed. Due of their size and protein requirements, Shantak breeding season is particularly dangerous to humanoid settlements found near nesting grounds.



Anatomical Features:

Shantaks have a body plan that loosely resembles that of extinct theropods. They have an elongated head, two forelimbs, two hindlimbs and a long rigid tail. Like avialans, the animal's front limbs are adapted for flight but, unlike theropods, their wing structure is more akin to that of pterosaurs.

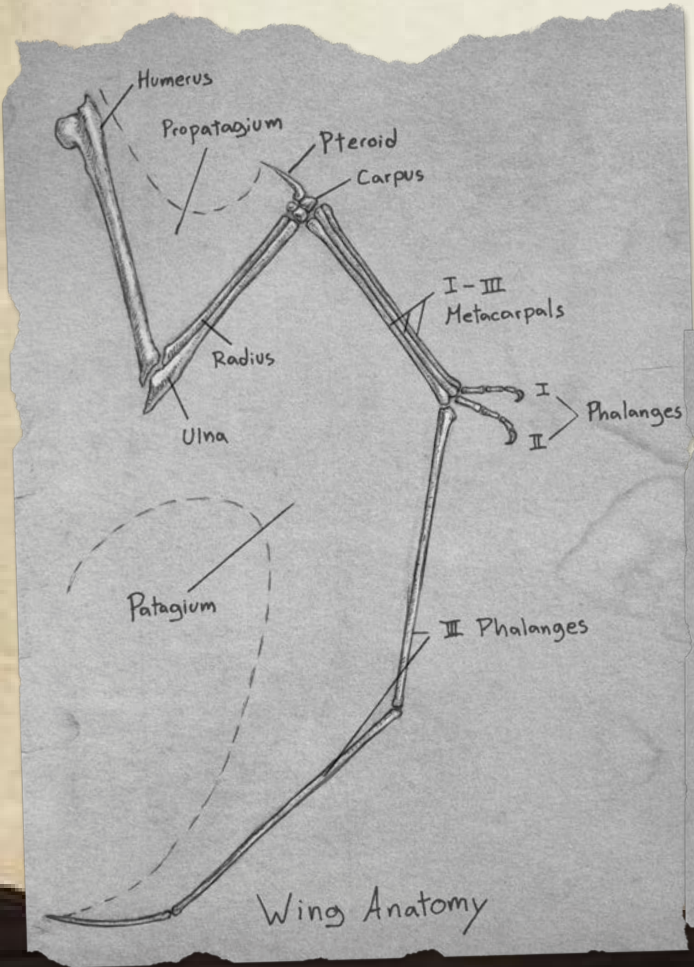
The creatures have an elongated skull with a V-shaped snout filled with sharp teeth that are fused together near the tip to form a strong beak. Their eyes are located at the sides of the skull and show adaptations for low-light vision. The top of their head is crowned with long vestigial quills and decorative feathers.

Aside from their head ornament and a line of vestigial feathers that grow along their back and tail, Shantaks are mostly covered in scales. These are thinner and more flexible near the joints and stiffer around the head, feet, and ventral portions of the body.

Shantak wings have a structure that closely resembles that of pterosaurs, something that has incited some debate regarding their phylogeny. A typical wing is made up of a short upper arm (humerus) and a longer forearm (radius and ulna) that articulate to a short carpus and long metacarpals. They have three fingers, one of which is clawless and grows as long as the rest of the arm. They have two alar membranes: the brachiopatagium and the propatagium.

Unlike pterosaurs, Shantaks have powerful and muscular legs that help thrust their heavy bodies into the air when taking off. Because of their leg and hip structure, they are commonly classified as saurischian theropods.

Dissecting a Shantak is not particularly hard but must be performed with utmost care. The creature's brain is about the size of a human's, but not as developed. Its eyes are fairly large and are hidden away behind soft tissue. Abdominal and thoracic dissection reveals an otherwise avian anatomy save for a well-developed, teeth-filled gizzard. Large air sacks connect to the lungs and grow into its neck, thorax, abdomen, and otherwise hollow bones. Finally, the neural spines on their thoracic vertebrae are vertical and grow longer than on the rest of the spine.

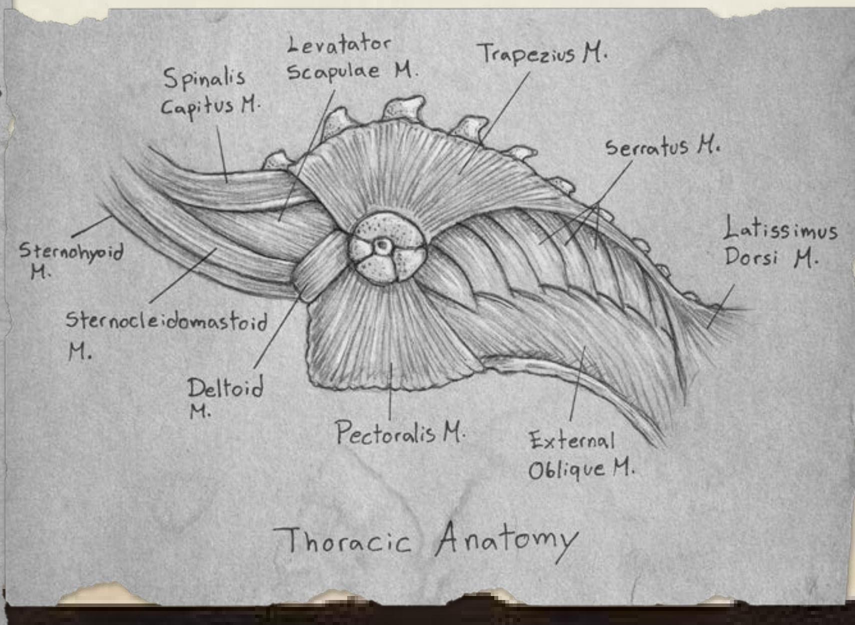

Humerus
Propatagium
Pteroid
Carpus
I – III Metacarpals
Radius
Ulna
I
II
Phalanges
Patagium
III Phalanges

Wing Anatomy

Biology & Ecology:

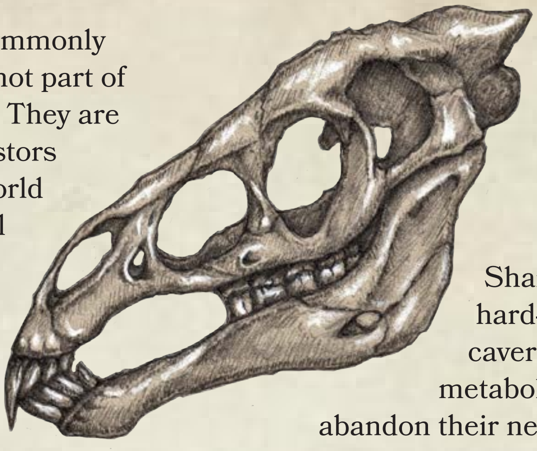
Shantaks are a species of theropods derived from a prehistoric ancestor that is now believed to be extinct. Local folklore suggests that the last member of this extinct family is kept inside the main dome of the palace of the Veiled King, in the city of Inganok. However, no human has been known to have seen this creature, and its existence has yet to be confirmed.

The Shantak ancestors are thought to have been very large theropods with many characteristics of waking-world avialans. They appear to have transitioned to the Dreamlands before the Cretaceous period, where they filled the "large predator" niche near the ranges of Leng. A combination of their new diet and persistent exposure to energy radiation from Leng (which appears to emanate from the plateau's ancient monastery complex) bestowed the creatures with a horrendous appearance and monstrous size. Shantaks eventually lost their feathers and acquired an abnormal forelimb bone distribution, resulting in their present-day wings. This new body plan allowed them to be proficient both as quadrupeds and flying hunters, allowing them to colonize other lands beyond Leng, particularly the northern wastes beyond Inganok. Recent discovery of Scansoriopterygid fossils in Asia has rekindled the debate of Shantak origins and evolution.


Levatator Scapulae M.
Trapezius M.
Spinalis Capitus M.
Serratus M.
Latissimus Dorsi M.
Sternohyoid M.
Sternocleidomastoid M.
Deltoid M.
Pectoralis M.
External Oblique M.

Thoracic Anatomy

While modern Shantaks are commonly referred to as "birds", they are not part of the avialan group of theropods. They are smaller than their extinct ancestors but larger than most waking-world elephants. Whether their actual phenotype is the result of natural selection or selective breeding is unknown. In any case, they are favored steeds and servants of the more mysterious humanoids that inhabit the Dreamlands who often devote themselves to transdimensional beings like the Crawling Chaos.



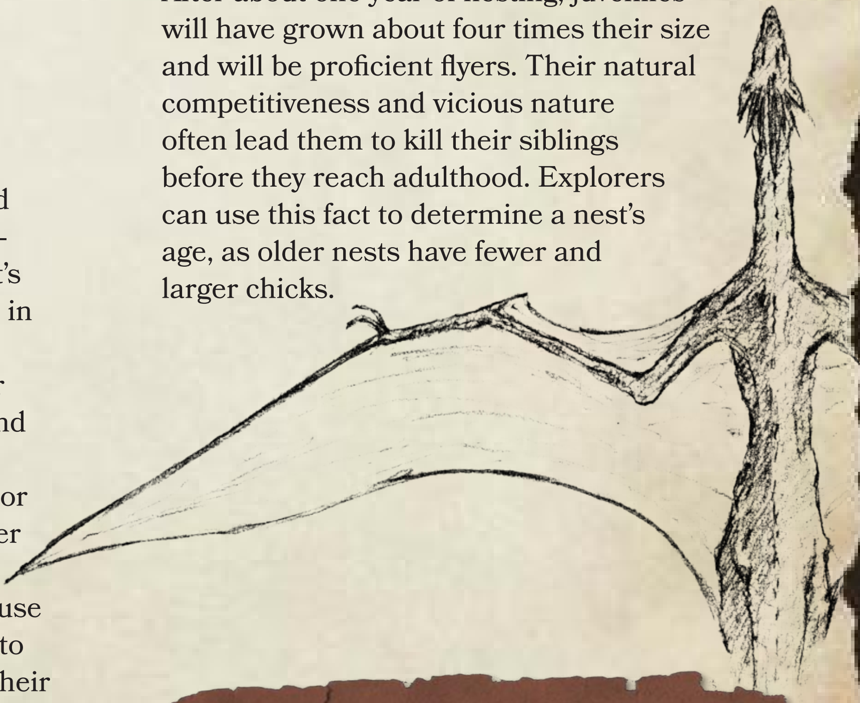
Most Shantak nests can be found in cool, mountainous environments, north of Inganok or around Leng. They usually brood inside caverns on mountain peaks, with the exception of the mountain range that separates Kadath from Leng. It appears that these creatures have developed an instinctive phobia for Nightgaunts and, as a result, will avoid nesting near them.

Due to their aerodynamic design, powerful musculature, and relatively light weight, Shantaks are the fastest natural dwellers of the Dreamlands. This inherent trait is often exploited and amplified by cultists and extradimensional creatures, who use space-bending techniques to enhance their mount's speed to travel through dimensional spaces in an instant.
Although not as intelligent as humans, their cognitive skills are moderately developed and may surpass waking-world ravens. Empiric observation suggests that they evolved mirror neurons similar to those of parrots and other waking-world birds that allow them a high ability for empathy. Unlike birds, Shantaks use this ability while hunting, as it allows them to keep track of their prey's emotional state. Their behavior suggests that the perception of terror in their prey triggers a dopaminergic rush that activates their neurological reward system, which, in turn, explains why they display sadistic behaviors aimed at emotionally wearing down their prey. Because of this, the Shantak species should always be considered dangerous, even if they appear to be domesticated.

Development:

Shantak hatchlings emerge from hard-shelled eggs laid inside caverns or cliffs. Because of their metabolic needs, both parents must abandon their nests for hours at a time to go hunting. During these moments both hatchlings and eggs are vulnerable to predators like Leng Folk, Spiders of Leng, and Wamps. If laid too deep inside a cave, they are also vulnerable to Ghasts and Gugs.

Occasionally, Shantak nesting sites have been targeted by human settlers in attempts to limit the number of active hunting adults. While the nests are not difficult to find for those familiar with the creatures' guttural call, these types of endeavors are usually doomed to fail.
After about one year of nesting, juveniles will have grown about four times their size and will be proficient flyers. Their natural competitiveness and vicious nature often lead them to kill their siblings before they reach adulthood. Explorers can use this fact to determine a nest's age, as older nests have fewer and larger chicks.



Explorer's Note:

Persistent exposure to the Shantak's call has been reported to cause delirium, hallucinations, and dissociative symptoms in humans.

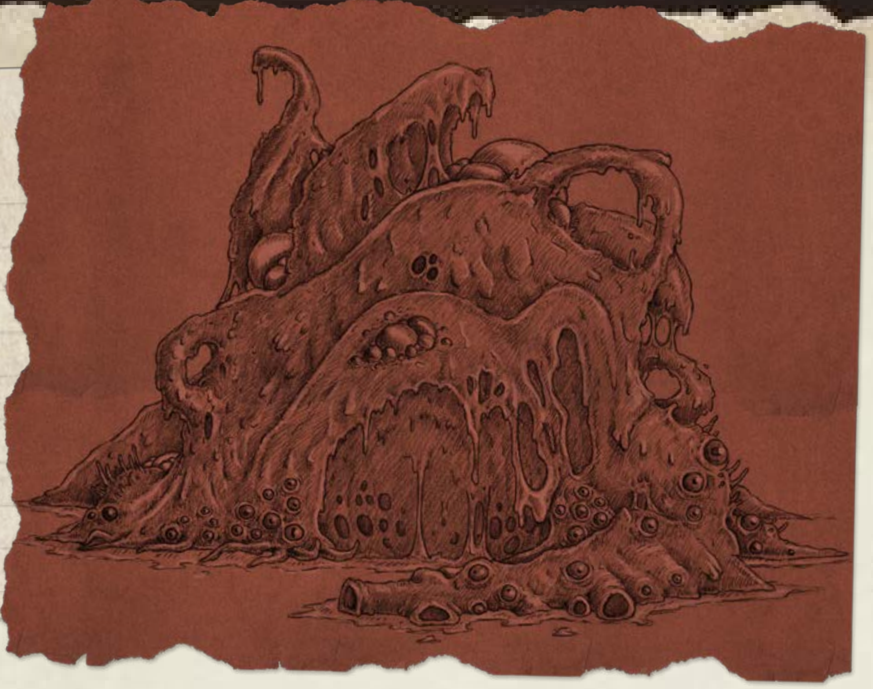
Shoggoth

Nature: Matter-based protoplasmic mass

Weight: ~ 45 t / 50 s. t.

Height: ~ 5.5 m / 18 ft.

Habitat: Antarctica



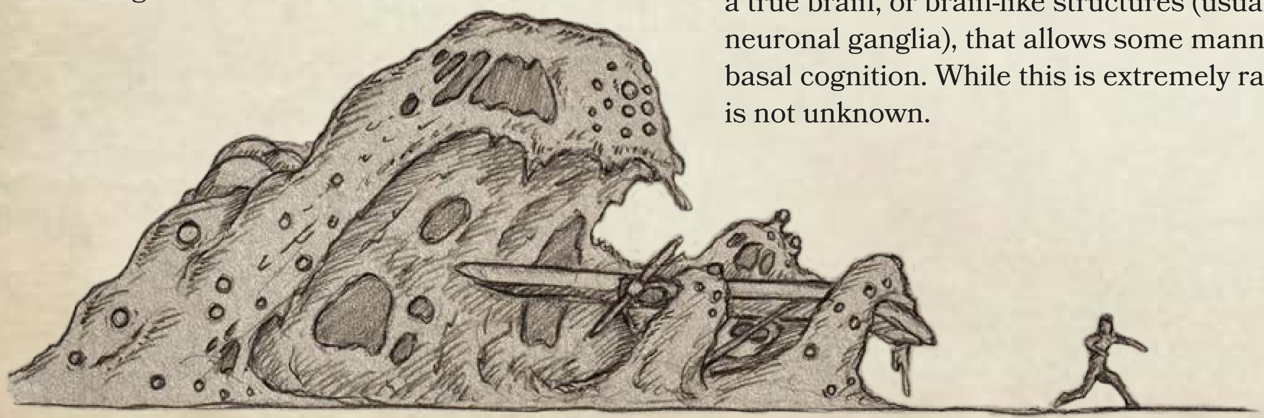
Shoggoths are one of the most versatile creatures fabled in ancient folkloric texts. They usually appear like a massive, gelatinous slime that is capable of growing and absorbing organs at will. While their presence on our planet has been historically challenged by scholars, evidence suggests that they not only existed at some point of Earth's history, but that they still crawl beneath the ice sheets of Antarctica.

The Shoggoth is said to be the ultimate bearer of life, an eternally totipotent mass of undifferentiated organic material, able to evolve in an instant. If evidence of ancient Antarctic records is to be believed, they were brought to Earth by the Elder Things, who used them to build their cities and create an adequate condition for life to develop. The Shoggoths' versatility was central to the Elder Things' success, but it also spelled their doom, as Shoggoths developed semiconscious minds and rebelled against their masters.

Anatomical Features:

Shoggoths have an amorphous shape that is very similar to collagen-rich gelatins and other forms of dense slime. When out of water, their body is covered in crystalline, semiliquid secretions that prevent desiccation. Perhaps their most evident feature is their permanent exchange of sensory organs and other appendages. While they can, theoretically, develop any form of organ, they show a tendency to develop multiple forms of eyes and tentacles, but rarely develop bone, teeth, or complex mouths.

While Shoggoths come in all sizes, most reported individuals are about the size of a truck or small train. Because of their thick collagenous matrix, they rarely need to develop musculoskeletal systems to support their mass. Some individuals are known to have developed a true brain, or brain-like structures (usually neuronal ganglia), that allows some manner of basal cognition. While this is extremely rare, it is not unknown.



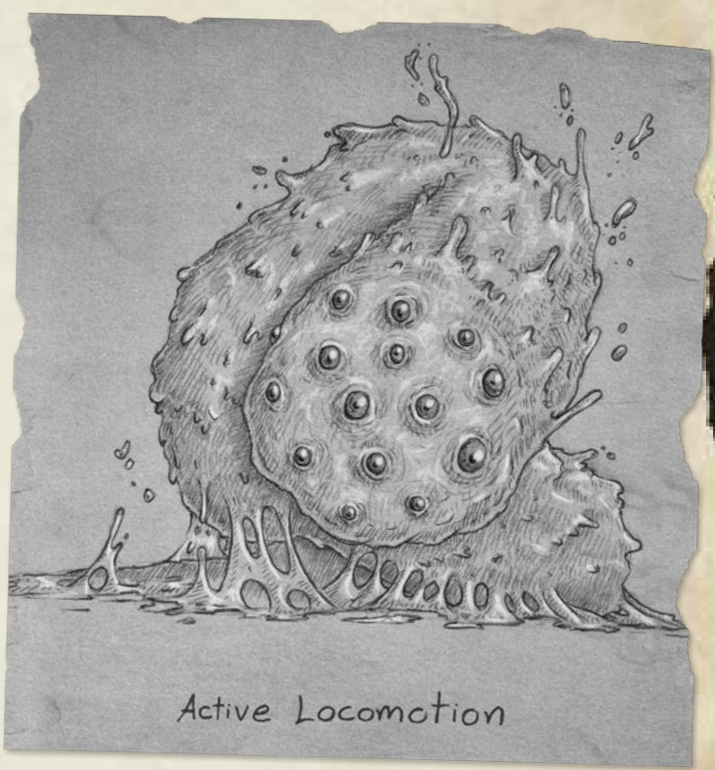
Due to persistent debate among cryptobiologists, it is important to note the differences between Shoggoths and Formless Spawn, which can be erroneously agglutinated into the same species. The main, most fundamental difference between both creatures is their cellular structure, which is markedly more differentiated in Formless Spawn. The matrix of each is composed of different materials, making Shoggoths both tougher and more massive than the fluid Formless Spawn. Finally, because of their evolutionary context, Shoggoths typically grow eyes, while the underground dwellers of N'kai usually develop teeth-filled mouths, bones, and horns.

Biology & Ecology:

Shoggoths are composed almost entirely of totipotent stem cells, making them, theoretically, blank slates of pure potentiality. Though true in principle, the reality is that small colonies of specialized cells constantly form and reform through mitosis and apoptosis as a response to their environment. Therefore, the massive Shoggoth can evolve disparate cellular strains in different parts of its body simultaneously. Consequently, they are highly adaptable but unstable organisms.

A Shoggoth's cellular structure is very primitive and often lacks any identifiable organelles. Instead, all cellular components float in an undifferentiated protoplasmic matrix that continually forms and absorbs structures as needed (or by accidental mutation). As with other organelles, the Shoggoth's cells lack a nucleus, but may form one if required, making them facultative eukaryotes. Even cellular membranes can be grown or absorbed as required, resulting in multicellular tissues or single macroscopic cells (similar in structure to *Valonia ventricosa* algae). It has been suggested that in order to understand the evolution of all life, one needs only study a Shoggoth.

Most Shoggoths develop an interstitial space known as a mesenchyme, that is composed of a collagen-rich matrix. This particular composition is designed to maintain their characteristic gel-like structure that is both resilient and tough. While this limits the creature's flexibility and fluidity, it grants it incredible strength and stability.



Shoggoths do not appear naturally in the tree of life but are the result of guided evolution and genetic manipulation. On Earth, they were first developed by the Elder Things, who brought the seeds of life with them to colonize the planet. While most primitive life forms were left to follow natural evolutionary paths, Elder Things actively selected and bred Shoggoths to become highly adaptive cellular colonies that could have near-endless uses.

Because of their high adaptability, all Shoggoths are slightly different from planet to planet and even between biomes. Since they all come from a common ancestor, all Earth-dwelling Shoggoths share some common traits, which include a protective epithelium capable of diapedesis and specialized collagen-secreting cells called lophocytes.

Most individuals develop colonies of archeocytes (totipotent stem cells) that divide constantly to randomly evolve different types of specialized tissue (e.g., muscles, nerves, sensory receptors, protective tissue, etc.). If these tissues prove to be useful, they will persist and evolve into organs that will last until they are reabsorbed. Useless tissue collapses almost immediately after being formed and is broken down into its components.

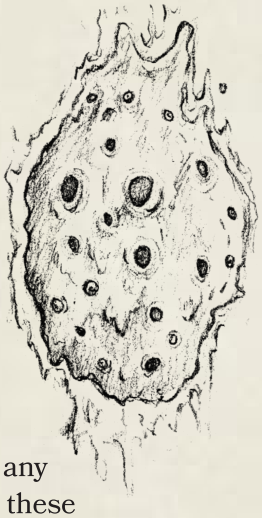
When in their underwater habitats, Shoggoths tend to spontaneously form pores to facilitate passive oxygen flow. Since they lack efficient means of cellular respiration in dry environments, most Shoggoths are unable to survive on land for long periods of time. Some modern strains have gradually developed specialized glands that secrete a hydrophobic mucous substance that covers their body. This helps insulate water and oxygen and allows the creatures to roam the surface for hours or days.

All Shoggoths are omnivorous and are able to internalize food in a process similar to phagocytosis. Once inside their body, they can generate different digestive enzymes depending on what they have ingested (enzymes usually act via glycolysis and proteolysis). Due to their slow digestion, large prey can often be seen inside the creatures for weeks after ingestion. Shoggoths have no stable nervous system, which explains their rather passive behavior when left undisturbed. This behavior, added to some physiological analogies, has led some to believe that they are common ancestors to the different species of porifera (sponges). According to this theory, sponges would have evolved from smaller Shoggoths that escaped their masters and adapted to a new ecological niche. After millions of years, they would have lost most (if not all) of their totipotential nature. An opposing theory defends that colonial zooids, like pyrosomes and salps, are more closely related to Shoggoths than any modern animal.

Development:

Shoggoths breed from colonies of stem protocells that eventually stabilize and develop cellular structures and a protective epithelium. Archeocytes then develop colonies of lophocytes to create a resistant collagen matrix, which allows the creature to grow and adapt. Wild Shoggoths are known to reproduce by spontaneous fission. Since they have no reproductive cycle, division is thought to be dependent on environmental conditions and chance. Proof of this is the fact that some individuals never reproduce and instead grow to become massive. In contrast, smaller creatures may divide many times per year and form colonies.

If left alone, smaller, simpler Shoggoths tend to find a niche where they can feed and become passive predators (like jellyfish) or filter-feeders. However, if the creatures' evolution is forced artificially, they will develop ever more complex tissues and organs and require a higher nutrient intake to maintain their activity. This makes for more useful but incredibly more dangerous creatures.



According to Elder Thing history, their need to build massive colonies and defend themselves against Starspawn, Mi-Go and Yithians led Elder Things to force Shoggoth evolution to its limits. Useful both as beasts of burden and as warriors, these overdeveloped Shoggoths eventually developed neuronal ganglia capable of vicarious learning and basic conscience. While not intelligent by any means, their newfound instincts led these creatures to imitate their masters' behavior and eventually rebel against them in a genocidal uprising that spread across the globe.

Explorer's Note:

Fluting sounds that compulsively repeat the same melodies can still be heard near the highest and most isolated Antarctic peaks. Tekeli-li, Tekeli-li. These sounds are but echolalic spasms of the former servants of the Elder Things.

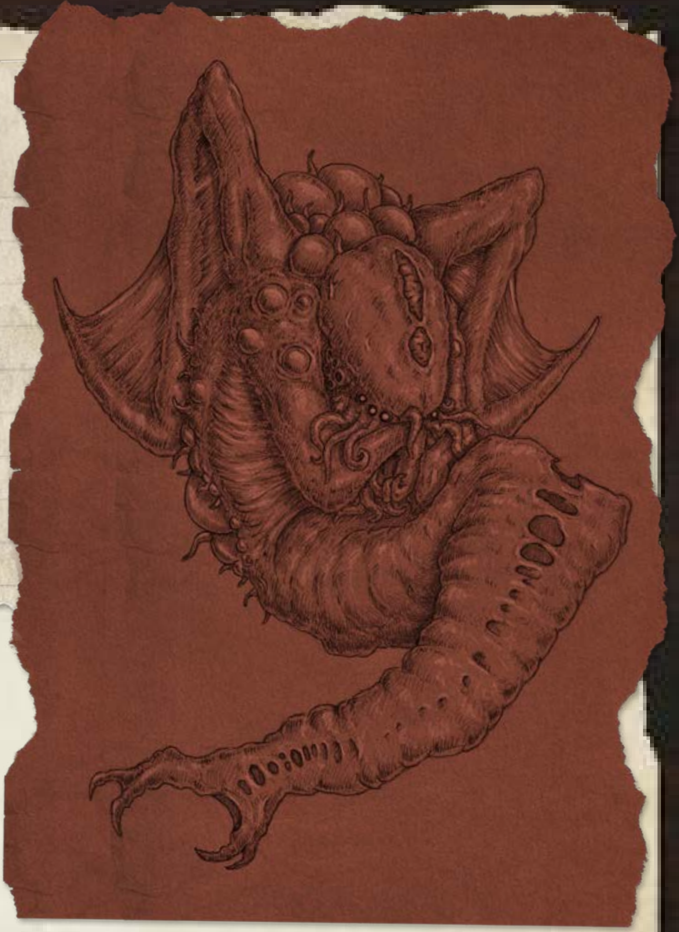
Starspawn

Nature: Transdimensional planetary conquerors

Weight: ~ 80 t / 88 s. t.

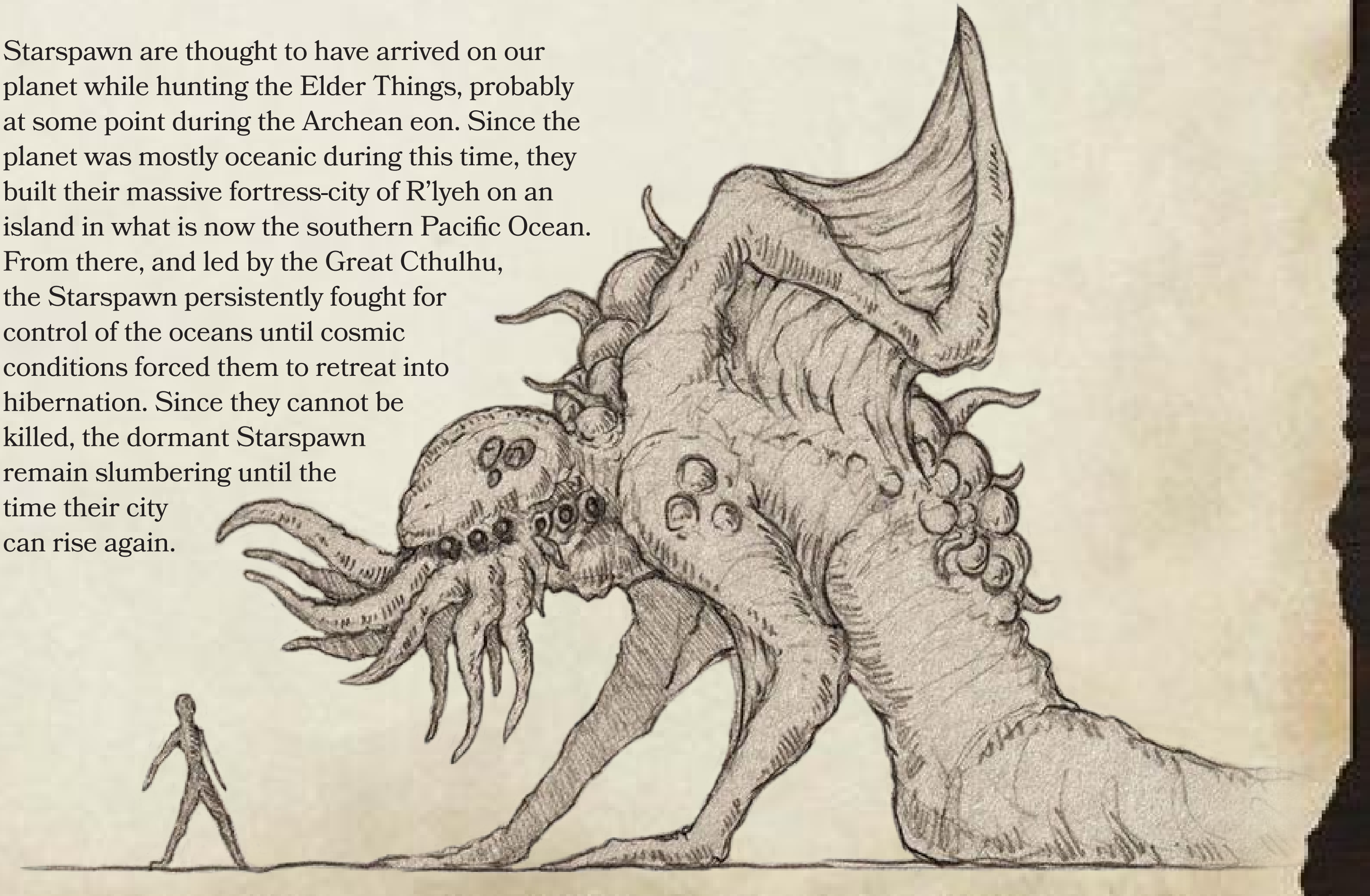
Height: ~ 10 m / 32 ft.

Habitat: On Earth, sunken city of R'lyeh in the southern Pacific Ocean



Starspawn are a species of interplanetary conquerors that travel from planet to planet building their cities and spreading their seed. Adults resemble massive six-limbed humanoids with a pair of membranous wings and a cephalopod-like face. They are thought to be some of the most intelligent transdimensional beings to inhabit Earth, but their minds are so alien to humans that their intentions are impossible to understand.

Starspawn are thought to have arrived on our planet while hunting the Elder Things, probably at some point during the Archean eon. Since the planet was mostly oceanic during this time, they built their massive fortress-city of R'lyeh on an island in what is now the southern Pacific Ocean. From there, and led by the Great Cthulhu, the Starspawn persistently fought for control of the oceans until cosmic conditions forced them to retreat into hibernation. Since they cannot be killed, the dormant Starspawn remain slumbering until the time their city can rise again.



Anatomical Features:

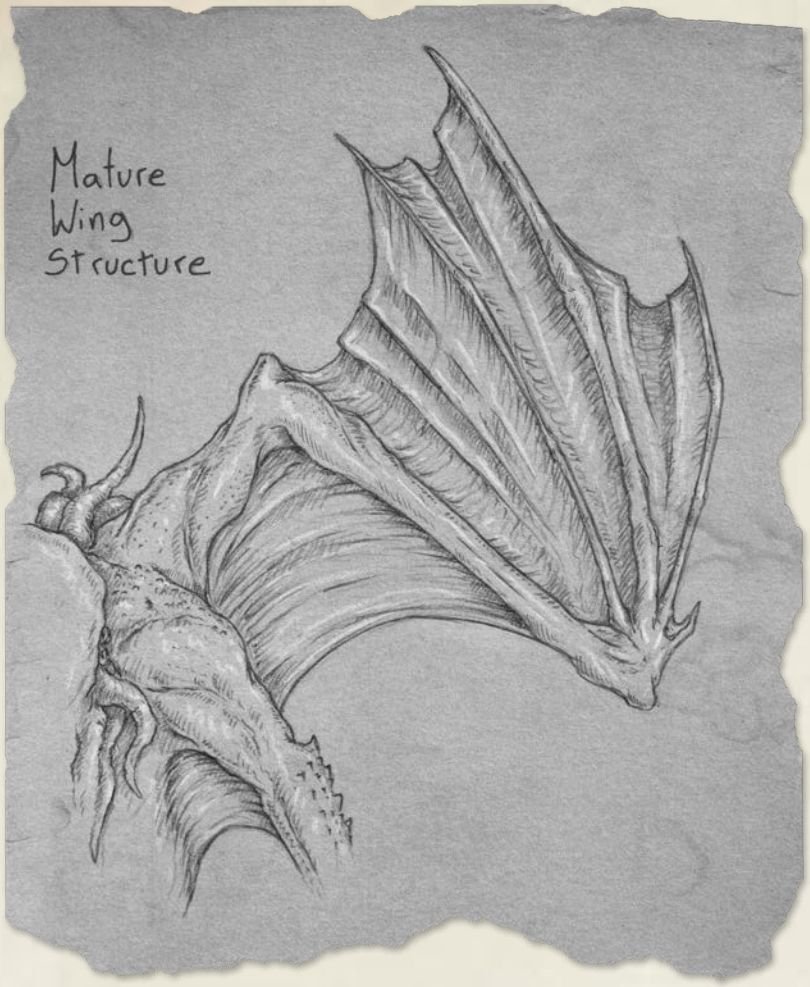
Starspawn have a humanoid morphotype that develops as they mature. Adults have a single head, torso, abdomen, and six limbs divided into pairs of arms, legs, and wings. While they seem completely solid at first sight, their general body composition is semisolid and can be molded according to need (see biology).

The adult Starspawn's head features multiple tentacular prolongations of variable lengths, usually distributed around the rostral side. Their number and length can depend on both the individual and its environmental context. Multiple eyes usually grow to the sides of the creature's head and can be divided into main (larger) and accessory (smaller) organs. Depending on the individual's age, mitotic cysts can often be observed around the cranium and back.

Starspawn wings are variable in shape and size depending upon their desired function. They usually grow to about twice the creature's size and have a bat-like morphology. Wing membranes (patagial membranes) can also alter their composition to adjust to the creature's medium (air, water, gas, plasma, or void).

Young Starspawn have relatively slender bodies that slowly acquire a "barrel" shape as they mature. Their arms and legs are muscular and have a humanoid distribution. Unexpectedly, their muscles are not solid, but composed of a viscous, conductive substance contained in bag-like fasciae. They usually feature long, clawed fingers, and interdigital membranes. If in underwater environments, they may feature fins and tentacles of various sizes.

Because of their slow developmental cycle, Starspawn are more commonly encountered at some point in their larval stage. During this stage their hindlimbs are fused together, forming a long tail-like structure. Their hands are not fully developed and often lack separate fingers. In addition, the cranium is not fully fused and may reveal parts of the inner brain. Like their forelimbs, the wings are also present but underdeveloped.



Dissection of a Starspawn is an extremely difficult task, as the creatures never truly die and regenerate almost immediately after being cut. What is more, even the most dedicated anatomists have trouble standing the smell that comes from cutting one of these creatures, which is often referred to as "worse than a thousand graves". Their internal composition is mostly gelatinous and hard to identify but seems to follow a certain cephalopod-like distribution. They have no true bones or spine, which indicates that their structure is sustained by the bag-like musculature and semisolid integuments. Interestingly, the whole body seems to react to electrical stimulation from the brain. No digestive or circulatory systems have been identified.

Biology & Ecology:

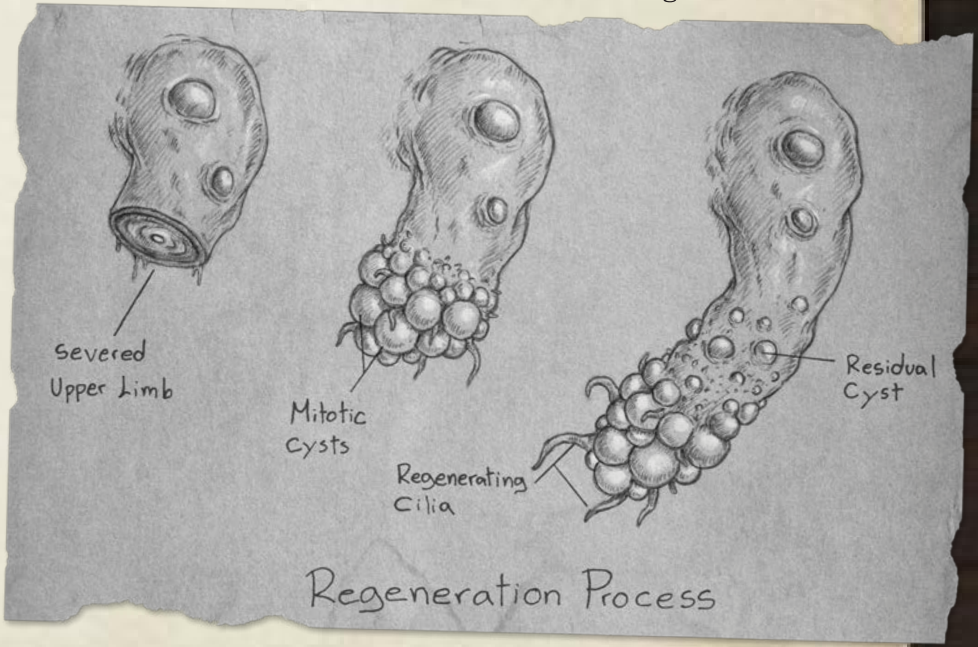
Starspawn are a species of transdimensional planetary colonizers. They seem to interact transversally through various dimensions and, therefore, are hard to comprehend. These traits make them some of the most powerful beings to have ever inhabited our planet.

While possessing slightly different phenotypes, all Starspawn have the same basic structure. The species as a whole reproduces asexually via cloning of the parent, which deposits genetically identical larvae in spawning pools adapted to the planet's environment (which, on Paleozoic Earth, meant oceanic environments). Phenotypic divergence could be caused either by spontaneous mutation or epigenetic gene activation (supposing these creatures have genomes).

Ancient texts claim that the being known as Great Cthulhu is the largest and most important member of the Starspawn species. Some even suggest that Cthulhu has some religious influence over other Starspawn, as it is sometimes referred to as the "high priest" of the gods. This has led some scholars to believe that "Cthulhu" might not be the name of one individual, but a hierarchical position or rank held by a particularly powerful member of the species.

Upon their arrival to Earth, Starspawn concentrated their activity in the city of R'lyeh, located in what is now the southern Pacific Ocean, and expanded from there. They warred with other creatures that sought the planet for its resources, always adapting to Earth's changing surface. It is likely that this city was built with hypergeometric properties and, because of this, was itself a gate or junction to different dimensional planes. As complex and successful as they were, the Starspawn's campaign on Earth was dependent on their ability to funnel energy from R'lyeh. It has also been suggested that their control over their corporeal form might be dependent on the electromagnetic configuration of nearby star systems, which align "correctly" in a cyclical manner. Oral tradition tells that, probably at some point during the Mesozoic, this cosmic alignment came to an end, effectively ending the Starspawn's ability to manifest physically on our planet. As a result, the great colonizers fell back into hibernation until the stars were right once more.

Because of their transdimensional nature, Starspawn cannot truly die, and instead simply lose their ability to interact with the material world. Oral tradition within the cult of Cthulhu suggests that they lie awake but unable to move, being ever conscious of what happens in the universe. To regain control of their bodies, certain conditions must be simultaneously met. The first one seems to depend on the configuration of nearby star systems, which must align in a way that favors their transdimensional physiology. The second one, and the main objective of Earth-based cults, is the artificial reactivation of R'lyeh, which can be achieved with the creation of a dimensional junction, a wormhole, or a "gate" near the sunken city. If both conditions are met, the Starspawn need but "will themselves back to life".



While most Starspawn are still larval, their cognitive abilities surpass those of human scholars. In fact, their brain structure seems to extend to their bodies without needing peripheric nerves. In a sense, their whole bodies are believed to act partially like a complex brain. This massive neurological activity seems to resonate in the form of magnetic waves that interfere with animal brain patterns. These waves have been known to cause nightmare epidemics and mass psychotic breaks in populations close enough to one of these slumbering individuals. Other victims retain their consciousness but develop delusions of control and megalomania, which are reinforced by recurring dreams.

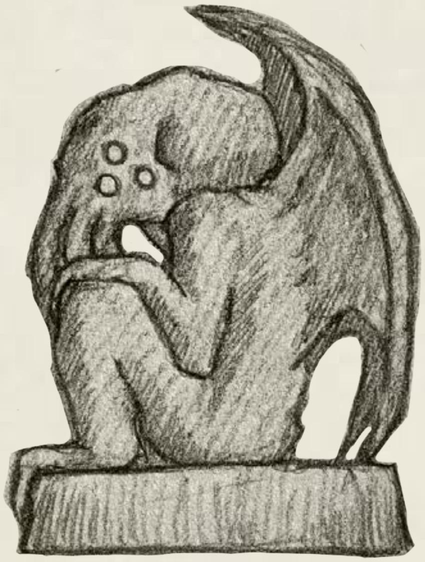
Because of their multiple dimensions, Starspawn behavior is incomprehensible to three-dimensional organisms. They have, therefore, been portrayed as evil creatures determined to destroy and torture at will, as if their sole drive was their obsession with mankind. However, it's important to understand that Starspawn probably cannot comprehend humans as peers, and instead think of us as mere physical phenomena. As a consequence, their care for humanity's wellbeing is probably analogous to a human's care for the wellbeing of photons.

Development:

As part of the same species, all Starspawn follow the same developmental steps, but may differ slightly depending on their local environment. Because of their origin and history, Earth strains are adapted to thrive in oceanic environments. Other strains existing on different planets may be adapted instead to gaseous or desert conditions.

Very young Starspawn larvae are about the size of a fully grown human, have four short tentacles, and lack limbs. As they grow, they sprout two immature forelimbs and develop short wing-like prolongations. Their inner brain develops faster than their cranial integuments, leaving it exposed in juveniles and only partially hidden in adults. Hindlimbs are the last to develop, signaling the creature's maturity into adulthood. Juvenile Starspawn have long, slim tails that grow shorter as the creatures develop.

Because Starspawn larvae require fewer resources to maintain their physical form, they can be found preparing the way for an adult's awakening. A single larva can use its psychic abilities to command entire cults to do its bidding even centuries before the "stars are right". As per current knowledge, proof of relatively recent larval activity includes the creation of the humanoid-like Deep Ones as engines to the Starspawn plans.



Explorer's Note:

Because of their size, folk stories tend to depict Starspawn in a manner similar to dragons and other massive monsters. However, the real threat behind a Starspawn is not its ability to physically destroy buildings, but its ability to quietly break the mental threads that compose the human psyche.

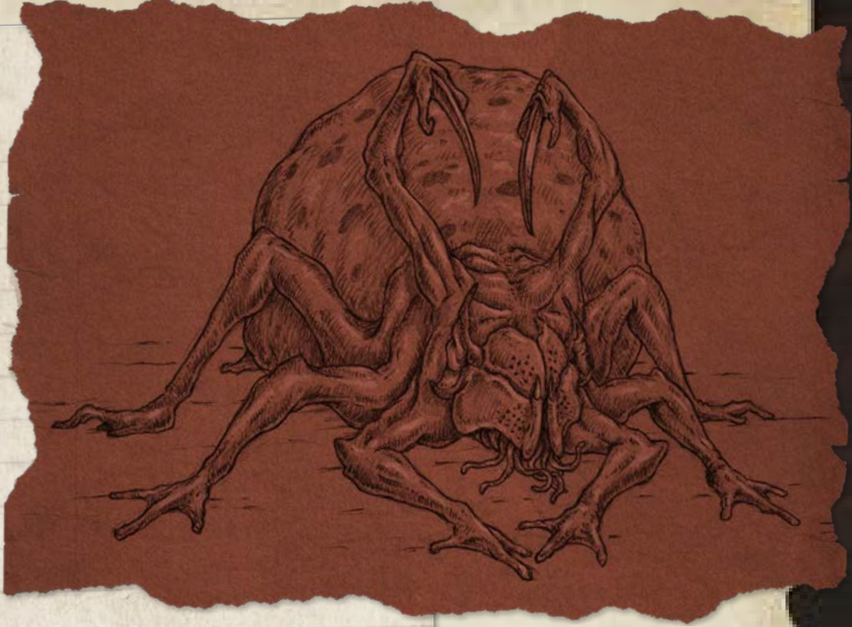
Wamp

Nature: Matter-based dream plague-bearers

Weight: ~ 50 kg / 110 lb.

Height: ~ 1.5 m / 5 ft.

Habitat: Dreamland sewers, bogs, marshes, battlefields, hospitals, etc.



Among all the creatures that roam the Dreamlands dimension, few are as universally abhorred as the infamous Wamps. These animals feature an eyeless, bat-like face, a bloated body, and nine limbs. Their thick skin is frequently covered in pustules, cysts, eschars, and ulcers. Adults are usually about the size of a wolf and, depending on their last meal, can double or triple their weight.

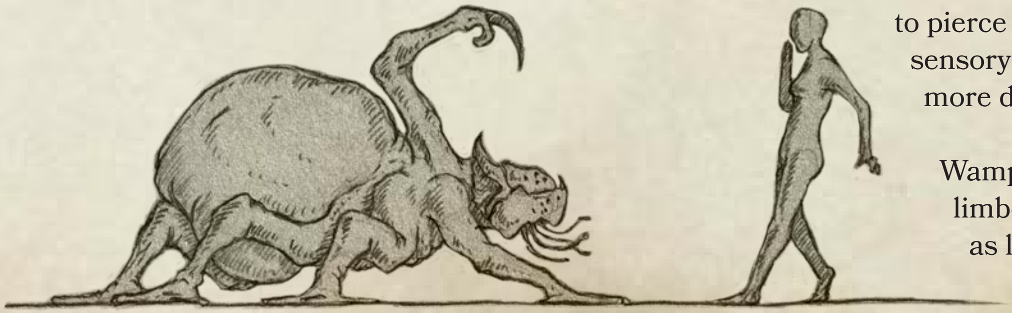
The creatures have a fragile digestive system that is unable to digest whole foods by itself. As a consequence, Wamps only feed on decomposing matter that is partially digested by enzymes vomited upon a meal. Wamps quickly settle near sources of persistent putrescence and spread deadly plagues through nearby populations. Fertile females have also evolved hematophagy as a means to increase their iron and protein intake and can bleed a zebra dry before being full.

Anatomical Features:

Wamps are easily recognized because of their characteristic face and body type. Their head features long pointy ears, olfactory organs, and a large complex mouth. All Wamps are eyeless and have no alternative light-sensing organ. Their body is usually bloated with gas and liquefied matter, making them loosely resemble Ixodes ticks. Their limbs are distributed into two groups to help them walk and dig.

Studying the creature's head is important to differentiate males from females. All Wamps have similar long, bat-like ears that point to the sides and small pores around their rostrum. They have two flexible upper lips and a pair of unfused mandibles with strong, hooked teeth. When fully open, the mouth will reveal a retractable proboscis and a group of mucosa-dependent sensory tentacles that hang below the mandible. Females have evolved a bladelike structure on their proboscis meant to pierce or cut through skin. Their sensory tentacles are also longer and more developed.

Wamps are enneapods, or nine-limbed. Seven of these limbs act as legs that emerge radially from their thorax and have a loose



salamander-like appearance. The two remaining limbs emerge from the dorsal thorax and grow upwards and frontwards. These are equipped with a scythe-like claw in place of their middle digit. Interestingly, despite being chordates, Wamps (also called Red-footed Wamps) develop with their spine facing downwards.

Dissection of a Wamp should always be considered a biohazardous endeavor for everyone involved. At first glance, their internal organs feature a batrachian distribution, suggesting that these animals evolved from amphibians. Some particularities include the close spatial relation between their ovaries and rectum, both of which join to form the creature's single cloaca. They have a markedly enlarged thymus and Waldeyer ring (pharyngeal lymphatic system), which points to an overactive immune system. Finally, the Wamp's digestive system features dilated gallbladders and a large and complacent duodenum that is filled with bacterial colonies that help with digestive processes.

Biology & Ecology:

Red-footed Wamps are plague bearers capable of mass epidemics in Dreamland cities. They are commonly found in bogs, putrid marshes, and ancient city sewers. Their habitat and corpse-based feeding habits (a.k.a., detritivory) have resulted in the species' development of an impressive immune system (as evidenced by their overdeveloped lymphatic system and thymus).

They usually plague graveyards, battlefields, and hospitals, where they look for corpses to feed on. It is not uncommon that, when lacking an appropriate cadaver, a hungry Wamp will attempt to hunt living prey (often preferring those with debilitating diseases). Its bite is extremely noxious, not because of venom but because of the high concentration of virulent anaerobic bacteria found in its saliva. Once bitten, the victim will suffer intense fevers, weakness, and gangrene of the affected limb, all of which will eventually result in septic shock. Using its excellent sense of smell, the patient hunter will then track its victim and drag it back to its lair, where it will vomit digestive enzymes to help liquefy the catch for easier digestion.

Fertile females need additional iron and protein supplements beyond those found in digested corpses. They obtain this supplement via complementary hematophagy. When ovulating, a female Wamp will normally follow a large endothermic animal (e.g., a zebra or yak) until it finds a safe moment to strike (ideally while the prey is sleeping). The creature will then leap upon the animal and wrestle it to the ground, exposing its retractable proboscis and using it to perforate a main artery. If the prey struggles, the ravenous female will use its claws to open other blood vessels and try to bleed the animal into submission. While feeding, the Wamp's parasympathetic nervous system triggers the vagal nerve to produce smooth-muscle contraction. This contraction transports eggs into the rectal sack and then expels both eggs and feces through its cloaca.

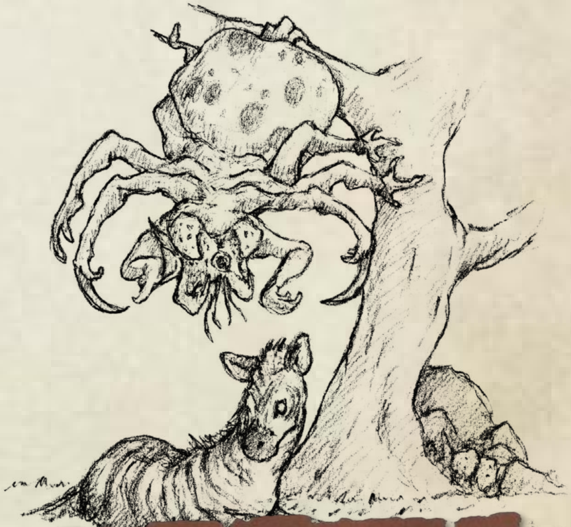
Wamps are not social creatures but often live in colonies wherever food is available. They usually avoid nesting too close to human settlements unless they can hide or properly protect their dens. Because of this, they can usually be found inside sewers, swamps, or bogs, where they can get easy access to prey but retreat quickly if threatened.

Throughout the Dreamlands, Wamps are commonly seen as omens of death, as their presence in a city leads to lethal epidemics that quickly decimate the population. This idea has led some civilizations to systematically burn corpses and desiccate swamps in attempts to limit the Wamp habitat and drive the creatures away. While folk tales suggest that Wamps are born spontaneously from the filth of sinful cities, this has since been proven to be false (see below).

Development:

Wamp eggs require small amounts of heat and biomatter to hatch. Both of these conditions can be generated by anaerobic bacteria found in rotting corpses (mainly *Clostridium perfringens*). Once hatched, dozens of young Wamps will immediately feed by absorbing the corpse's liquefied necrotic tissues and begin forming their own microbiota. Because of their well-developed immune system, they are not affected by the bacteria they ingest.

As young Wamps grow, their saliva will concentrate large amounts of anaerobes and become toxic to most animals. The pancreas will also mature and produce proteolytic enzymes that are potent enough to dissolve solid flesh. Then, after just a few days of quick development, the rat-sized juveniles will sprout out of the (now useless) corpse and seek a warm, moist environment to thrive in and build their dens.



Explorer's Note:

The study of Wamps has led to breakthroughs in antibiotic therapy, often at the expense of the investigators' own health.

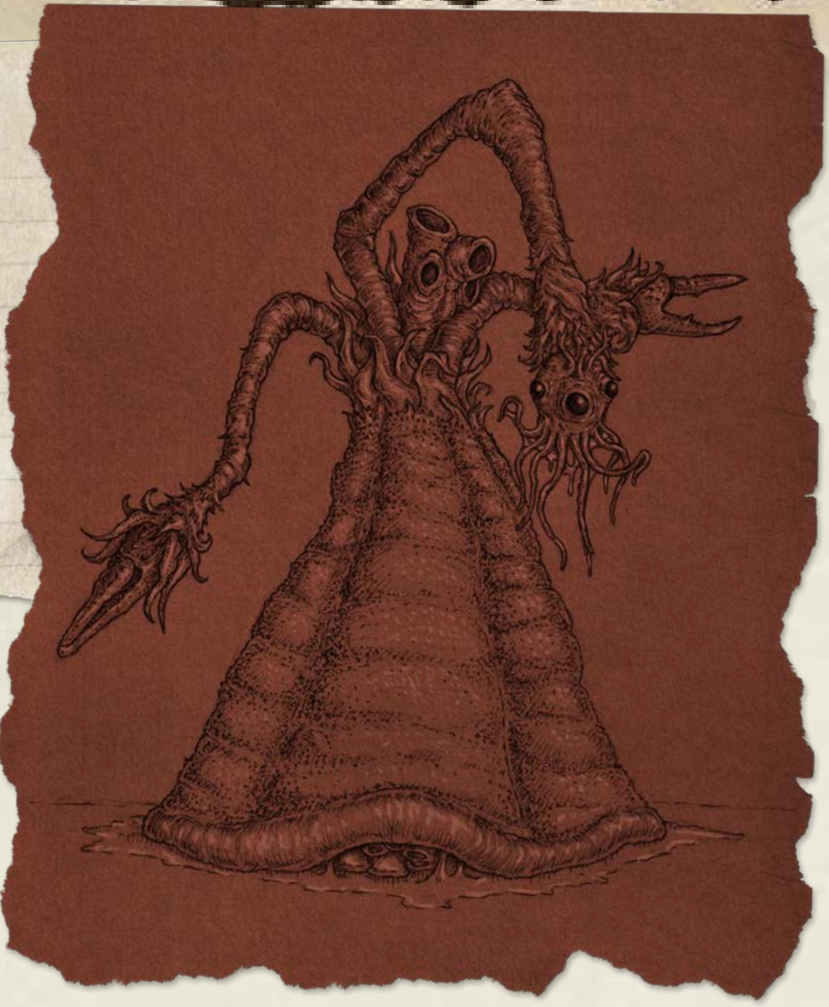
Yithian (Great Race)

Nature: Multidimensional mind-swapping scholar

Weight: ~ 90 kg / 200 lb.

Height: ~ 3 m / 10 ft.

Habitat: Variable



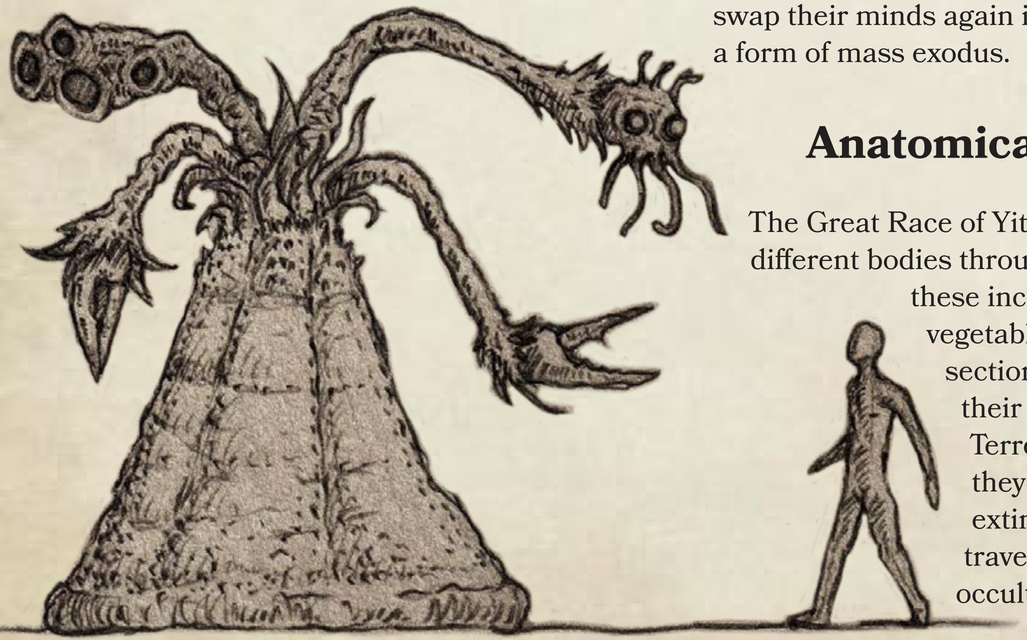
Yithians, often called "The Great Race", have been described as one of the most intelligent life-forms to have colonized our planet. They are hard to pinpoint as a species, as they are not so much living organisms as they are minds. The form they are commonly associated with has a conical lower body with four retractable limbs emerging from its top. Two claws, four trumpet-like openings, or a three-eyed tentacled globe tip each of these four limbs.

They are notable for their ability to "swap" their consciousness with other neurologically compatible creatures. With the aid of technology, they can not only project their minds through space, but also beyond the limits of time.

The previously described morphotype associated with Yithians is that of a prehistoric species whose bodies were "hijacked" by members of the Great Race when their previous forms were threatened. When Yithians feel their civilization is coming to its end, they simply swap their minds again into the future or past in a form of mass exodus.

Anatomical Features:

The Great Race of Yith has occupied many different bodies throughout the eons. While these include arthropods, vegetables, and animals, this section will only deal with their most recognized Terrestrial forms. Though they have long been extinct, records of time travelers and detailed occult traditions have helped



comprehend the creatures' morpho-physiology. Their overall morphotype was easy to distinguish, as it differed from all present-day life forms. They resembled large iridescent cones topped with four appendages and supported by a single, mollusk-like foot. The body, or pseudostem, contained most of the creature's organs and was surrounded by sturdy, rubbery scales. Careful observations have suggested that these were made out of a form of cellulose that reflects light in a manner similar to prisms. Larger and more flexible scales grew near the cone's base to allow for easier locomotion. Below the base, a complex foot expanded and contracted to move the body with the aid of a viscous slime. Scales near the top of the pseudostem were more vertically-oriented and notably sturdier. From there, a complex structure known as an inflorescence gave rise to four elongated appendages.

All four of these appendages were quite long and sturdy, even if they were boneless. They were also very flexible and could be fully retracted if needed. Each limb supported one of the following specialized organs:

- **Pseudoencephalon:** An irregular globe-like structure with three optical receptors, eight long tentacular vines, and four antennae. While it may have looked like a head, it did not host a brain, and instead had a small (albeit very complex) neural ganglion with afferent neurons coming from sensory organs and efferent connections leading to the pseudostem.

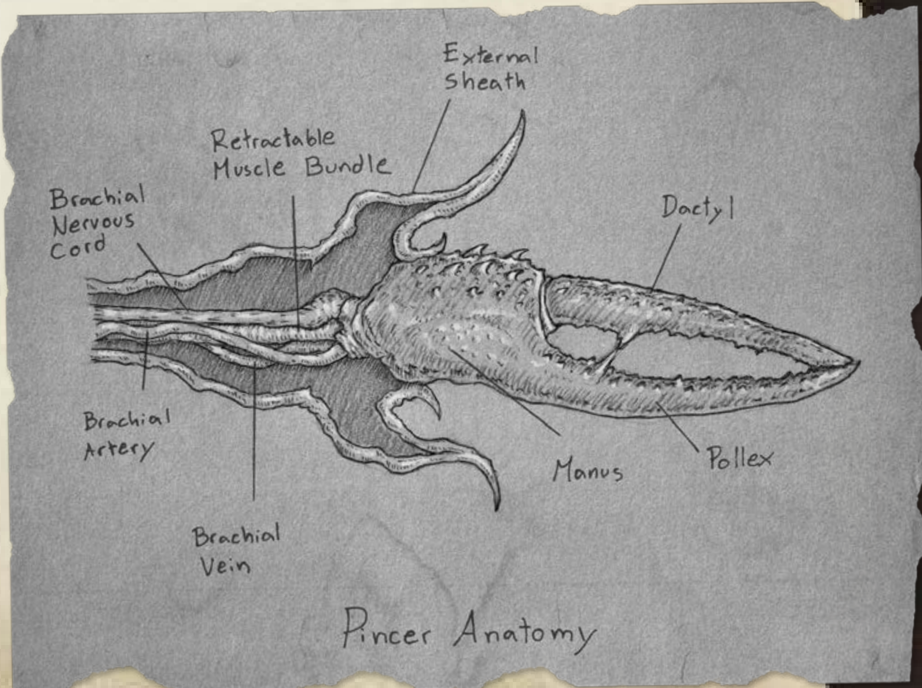
- **Two large grasping organs:** Two of the Yithian's limbs ended in pincers similar to those of a crayfish. These were impressively tough and capable of crushing bone and plate alike. Leaf and vine-like prolongations adorned both pincers.

- **Digestive opening:** Four trumpet-shaped cones sprouted from a single limb, forming the first portion of creature's digestive system. They were filled with proteolytic enzymes and were heavily lined with trichomes to protect them against parasites.

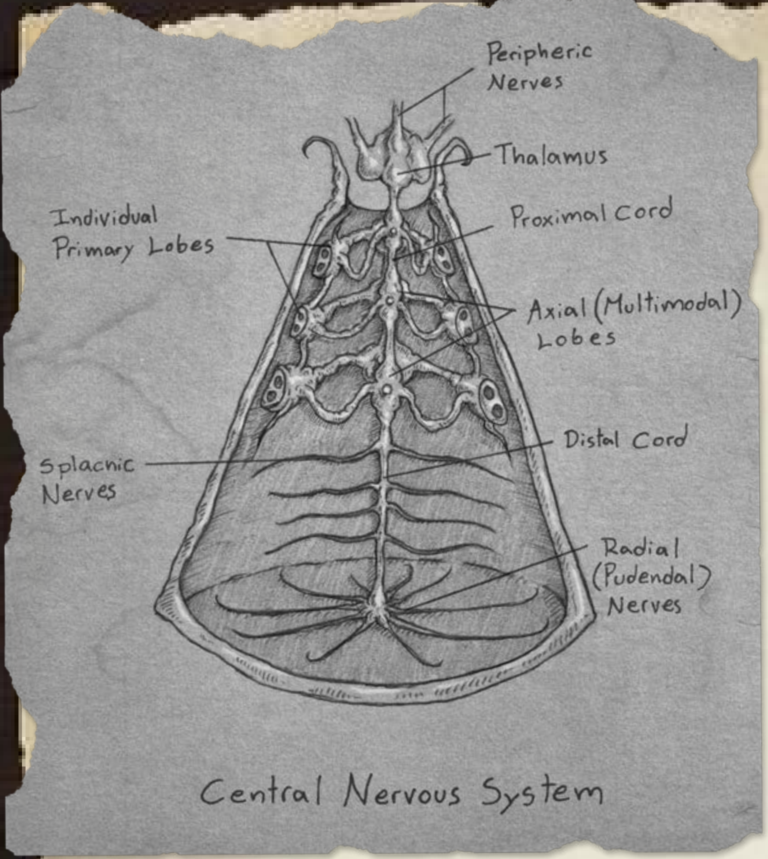
Dissection of a Paleozoic Yithian revealed a surprisingly simple blind digestive system that distributed nutrients directly to its tissues. They featured no single brain but had a complex system of brain-like rings located near their inflorescence. From there, a central nervous stalk projected peripheral nerves to the rest of the body. Finally, the creature's base contained the mantle (that formed the foot) and multiple ovaries that stored avocado-sized seeds.

Biology & Ecology:

Yithians are complex, multidimensional beings that have renounced the concept of a corporeal self, focusing instead on the cultivation of their minds. It is unknown if they were originally extradimensional organisms that evolved material bodies or if they were organic creatures that developed the ability to interact with other dimensions (the latter being the best supported by evidence). In any case, their existence is dependent on their ability to host their minds in a compatible complex nervous system.



Pincer Anatomy



Central Nervous System

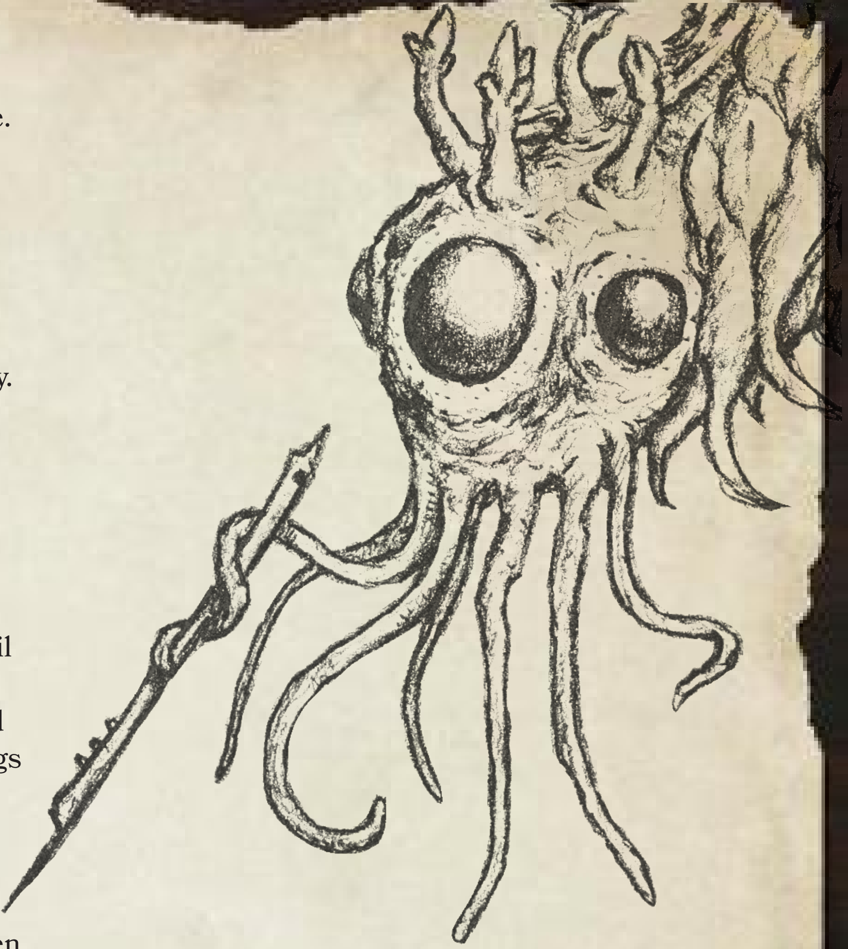
Using their ability to bend space and time, Yithians are able to detect neural systems that resonate on wave patterns similar to their own. When a suitable host is found, and with the aid of their advanced technology, they project their own brainwaves to "hijack" their victim's consciousness. Analogous to a wormhole, waves are emitted from the host's brain and are replicated on the Yithian's current body beyond the speed of causality, and vice versa. In practical manners, this "swaps" both minds for an undetermined amount of time. If the Yithian's former body is killed while its mind is projected, it will be unable to return to its previous form and be forced to live as an alien for the rest of its existence. On the contrary, if the host's brain is killed while the Yithian is occupying it, it will effectively kill the Yithian's mind as well.

The bodies described in this chapter originally belonged to the first cognate beings to naturally evolve on Earth. They lived during the Paleozoic era and appear to have been the last descendants of ancient Ediacaran biota. Their unique physiology seems as much vegetable as it was animal, suggesting they belonged to a wholly unknown kingdom of life. While they probably featured many unknown sensorial modalities, their vision and audition were similar to those of modern animals.
It is unknown if they evolved technology or metacognition on their own, but at some point, between the Carboniferous and Permian periods, they were chosen by the Great Race as their new hosts. When this occurred, the cone-beings' consciousnesses were sent back to the black planet of Yith, were they were forced to bear the doom that inspired the Yithian mass exodus. Back on Earth, the now-safe minds of the Great Race occupied their new bodies and began to build their massive cities; quickly rewriting whatever traces were left of their original hosts' culture or psyche.

The Yithian expansion was initially thwarted by their encounter with the gigantic basalt buildings that hosted the ravenous Flying Polyps. However, thanks to their advances in electromagnetic weaponry, the Great Race dominated their foes and trapped them under their own subterranean vaults. For the rest of their time on Paleozoic Earth, the scholarly Yithians swapped minds with thousands of creatures and carefully recorded the history of different planets, dimensions, and time periods. During this time, they also had to face other species thriving for control of the planet, including Elder Things, Fungi from Yuggoth and the Starspawn. Even more, their temporal projections were bound to attract deadlier predators like Hounds of Tindalos, Dholes, and more Flying Polyps.

Occult history texts suggest that a massive planetary cataclysm eventually liberated the vengeful Polyps, who sought to massacre all members of the Great Race. To avoid this fate, most Yithians projected themselves in a new exodus to the planet Mercury, leaving their earthly bodies in the hands of the confused Mercurian minds. Needless to say, all evidence of the Paleozoic bodies went extinct and left no known trace in the fossil record.

Whatever body they occupy, the Great Race is known to be an eminently scholarly species and is constantly trying to record the lives of notable characters across the universe and across time. While their massive archives must be remade whenever they flee a planet, they prepare for this by looking for signs of impending catastrophes in their near future. Unlike Elder Things, Yithians are avid users of technology. Ships, styli, weapons, and other contraptions are common basic additions to a Yithian colony.



Development:

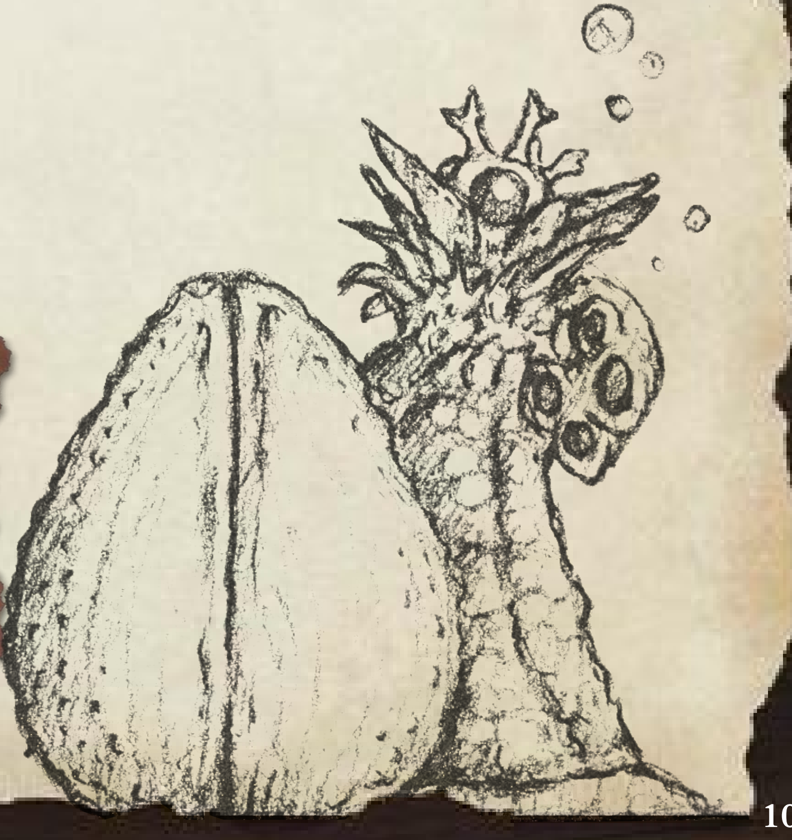
Young Paleozoic Yithians were cultivated near their parents' housing complex. Due to their incredible longevity, relatively few seedlings were allowed to develop at any given time. Until they fully matured, seeds and younglings were bound to large water tanks. Once they matured and gained full control of their limbs, younglings left their tanks and began to study the vast volumes of knowledge accumulated by their culture.

Sub-adults were assigned a craft and were given fixed resources by their central government, composed of a circle of leaders. Because of their advanced technology, most productive tasks were automated and Yithians were free to develop in the arts and sciences.

Because of the lack of thermoalgesic neurological pathways, old and sick Yithians rarely noticed that their bodies were failing. Even wounded individuals took some time before visually identifying their state. In time, their weakened bodies became unable to migrate and they were left to suffer a slow but painless death.

Explorer's Note:

Yithians value information above anything else and will happily allow their prisoners various degrees of freedom in exchange for their accounts of local history and folklore.



Zoog

Nature: Matter-based dream marsupial

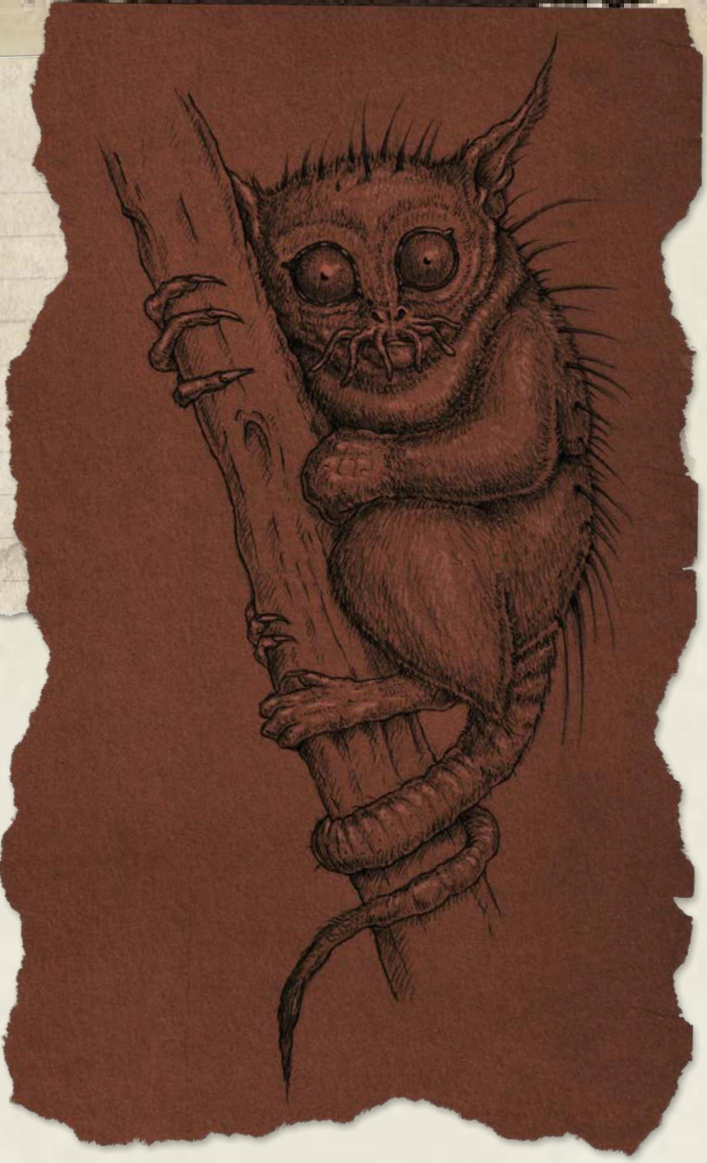
Weight: ~ 25 kg / 55 lb.

Height: ~ 75 cm / 28 in.

Habitat: Dreamlands' enchanted forest

Zoogs are a mischievous species of small marsupials commonly found in the Dreamlands dimension, particularly in the regions surrounding the enchanted forest. Their bodies are almost completely covered in fur and feature large bulbous eyes on top of their short, tentacle-covered snout. While primitive-looking, Zoogs are intelligent beings with culture and language similar to those of humans.

They are not particularly dangerous on their own but can be very threatening in large groups. It is common practice for Zoogs to corner intruders into accepting a deal with them. In exchange for safe passage, travelers are tricked into helping the mischievous creatures obtain whatever it is they want. As impish as they are, these small marsupials respect their treaties with uttermost discipline and seek spiteful revenge on those who do not.



Anatomical Features:

The Zoog morphotype is similar to that of waking-world tarsiers. Their body is mostly covered in dark fur, with the exception of their snout, tail, and paws. Their naked tail is muscular and prehensile, loosely resembling that of an opossum. Males have long quills that grow along their back while females feature a marsupial sack on their ventral abdomen.

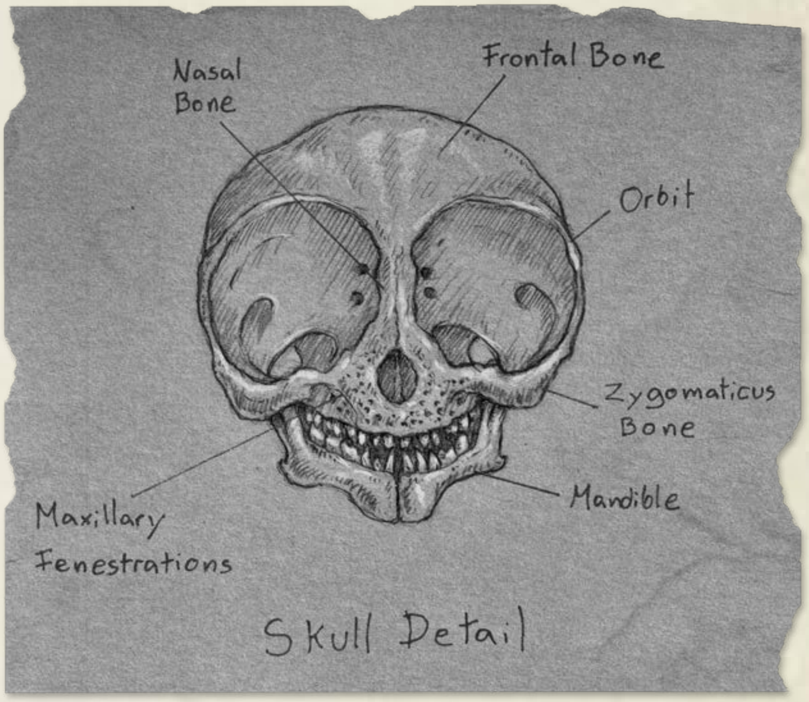
Their head features two large ears and a pair of bulbous eyes. Below them, a short and naked snout has evolved tentacles instead of whiskers, giving them their characteristic look. Interestingly, their lower jaw is not fused and is instead simply articulated via an elastic ligament. Their four limbs are short and end in rodent-like paws with four digits. Their long, curved claws are adapted for climbing, digging, and hunting. Dissection of a Zoog reveals a common mammalian anatomy with a somewhat enlarged braincase, unfused lower maxillary bones, and small fenestrations on the upper maxilla.

Biology & Ecology:

Zoogs are very social and intelligent creatures. They display all forms of human cognition, including language and symbolic thought. They usually live in dense forests or jungle areas, where they can use trees to build high burrows. If settling outside a forested area, they can dig underground dens that interconnect via tunnels.

Zoogs are omnivorous and will regularly feed on mushrooms and insects but, if possible, they prefer to feed on other animals, mostly birds, cats, and small reptiles. Although it is not common, they can gang up on young, wounded, or otherwise defenseless humans that approach their dens. Needless to say, humanoids can feed a whole tribe of Zoogs for a couple of days.

Their tribal hierarchy is determined by both age and ascendance. Older Zoogs are considered wiser and will be given a place in their council of elders. Nobles are considered congenitally superior and will be given the preferential right to rule. Though they are given less hierarchical power, Zoogs are not known to discriminate against non-nobles and will respect them based on their achievements.



Zoogs are natural diplomats and their first instinct when encountering a cognate creature is to strike a deal with it. While these types of deals are usually in favor of the small marsupials, the contract is respected above all else. Breaking a covenant with a Zoog guarantees permanent animosity with every tribe in the region.

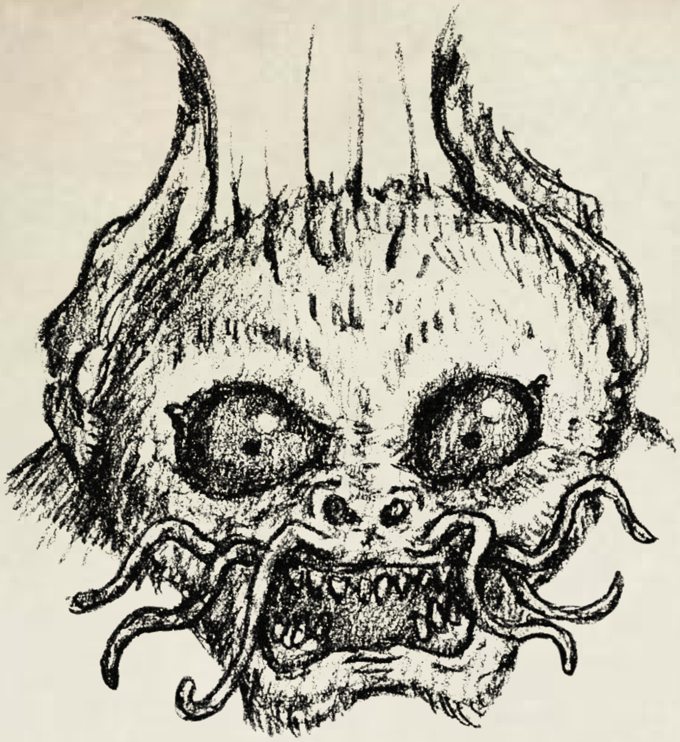
While the concept of money is alien to them, Zoogs value items they consider treasure. For them, wealth is measured depending on how many trinkets an individual has collected. These trinkets can be of technological, aesthetic, or ritual value and vary from group to group and between individuals. Since they rarely leave their homeland, they obtain these treasures by bargaining with travelers. One must be careful with bargaining though, as these small creatures are terribly ambitious and quickly turn to violence if they don't get what they want.

Competition for the same natural niches has made Zoogs and cats natural enemies. Because of this, they are very aggressive and will even eat each other if given the chance. Diplomacy is rarely effective when conflict arises between the two species and it often ends in one of them being displaced or forced to surrender after a deadly skirmish.

Development:

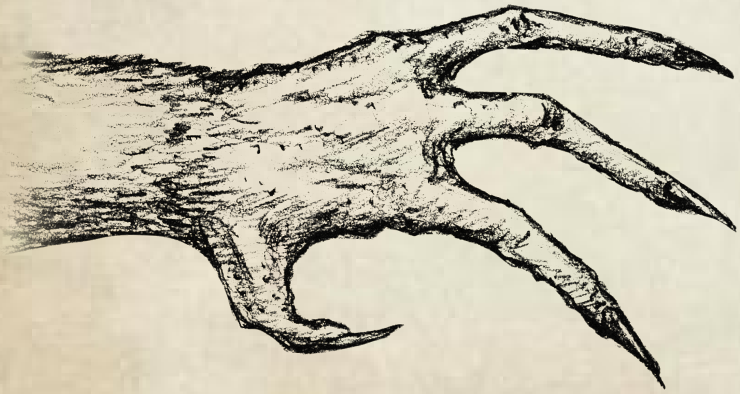
As is common among native Dreamlands' mammals, Zoogs are marsupials. They have short gestation periods of around 10 days, after which they give birth to a pack of underdeveloped newborns that travel to their mother's marsupial sacks. A single mother can carry around 8 to 10 babies at a time. Younglings feed on their mother's milk for about three months before needing to forage on their own. After one or two years, the now-juvenile Zoog leaves the parents' den to find their own place in the tribe.

Young Zoogs are known to be reckless and prone to leaving on adventures to explore and seek treasures. Because of their lack of knowledge and experience, these ventures don't usually end well. Unprovoked attacks on humans are almost always caused by bands of juvenile Zoogs looking for a thrill. Some of these attacks have even happened outside of the Dreamlands dimension.



Explorer's Note:

Zoogs are very sensitive beings and will often try to feel objects with their facial tentacles. Pinching them will cause immediate pain and force them to retreat.



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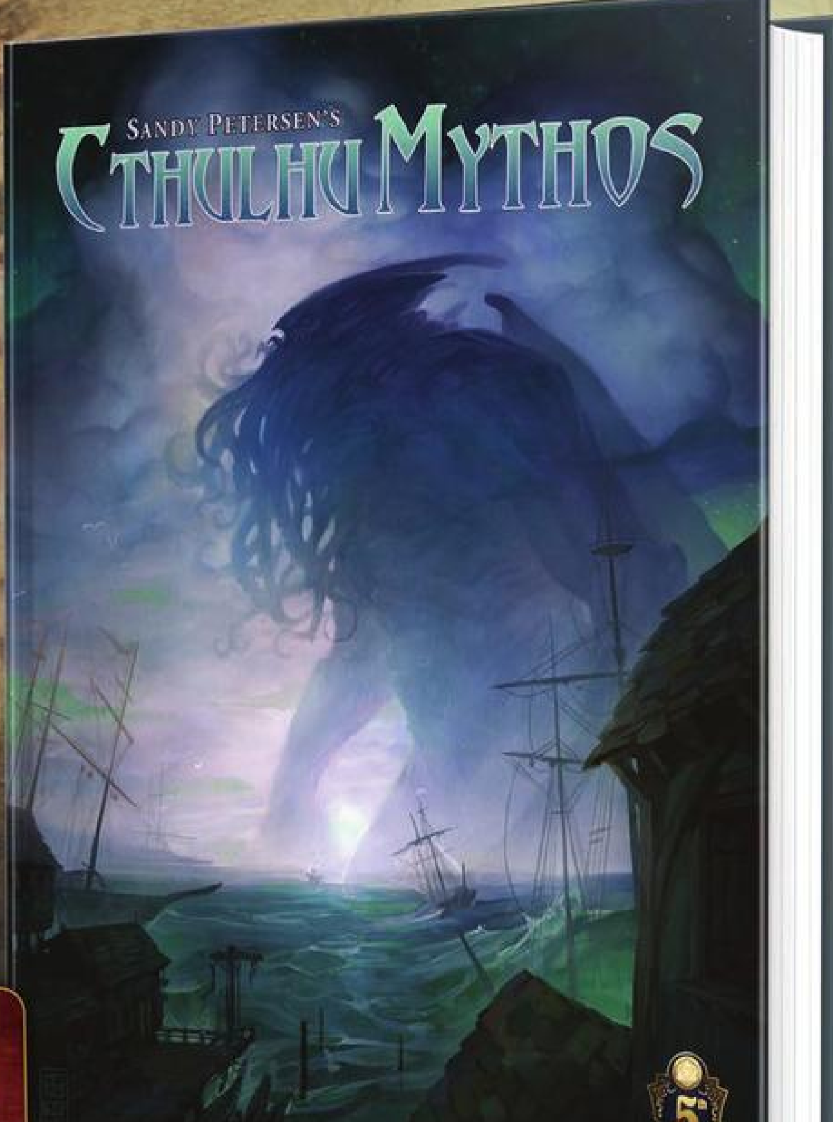
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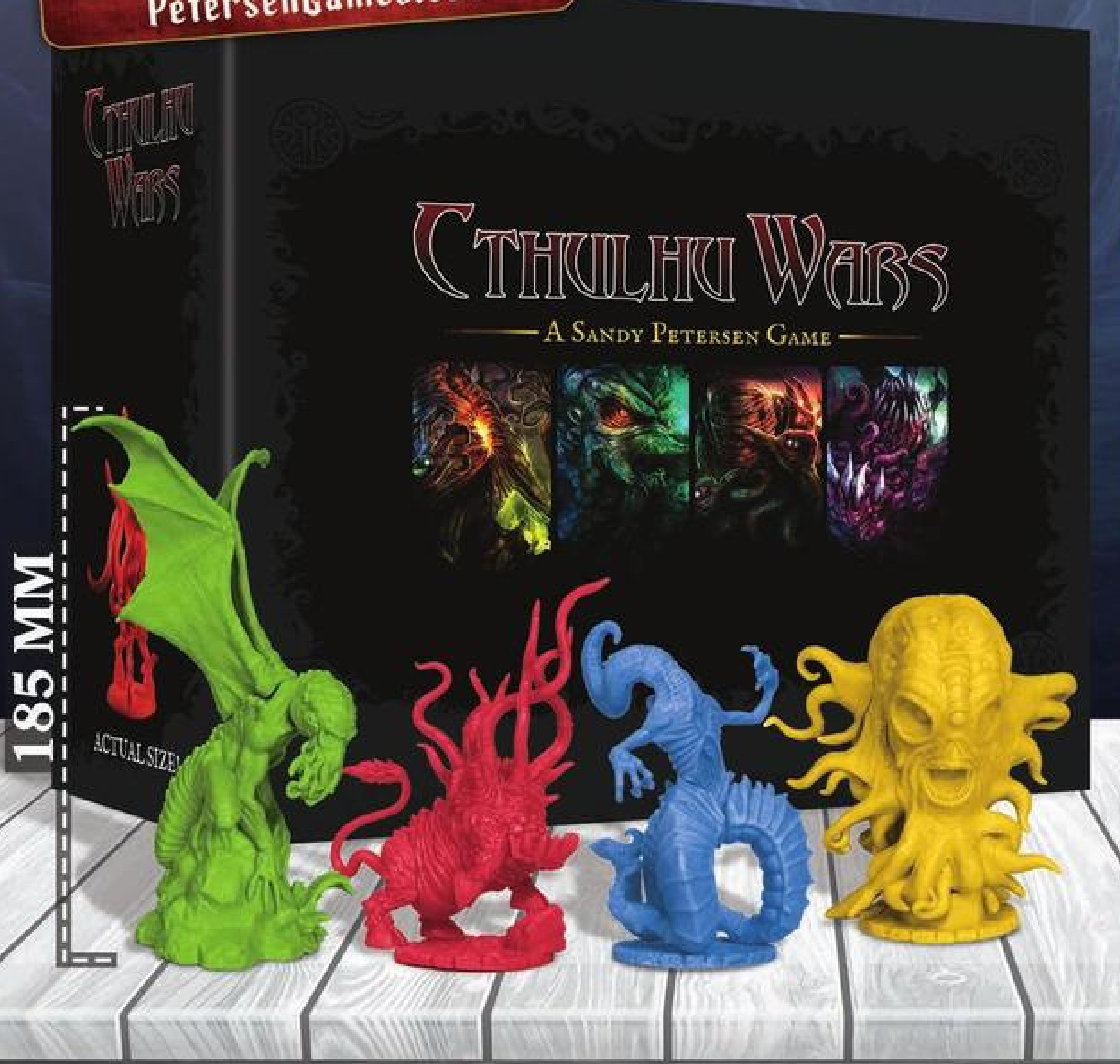

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